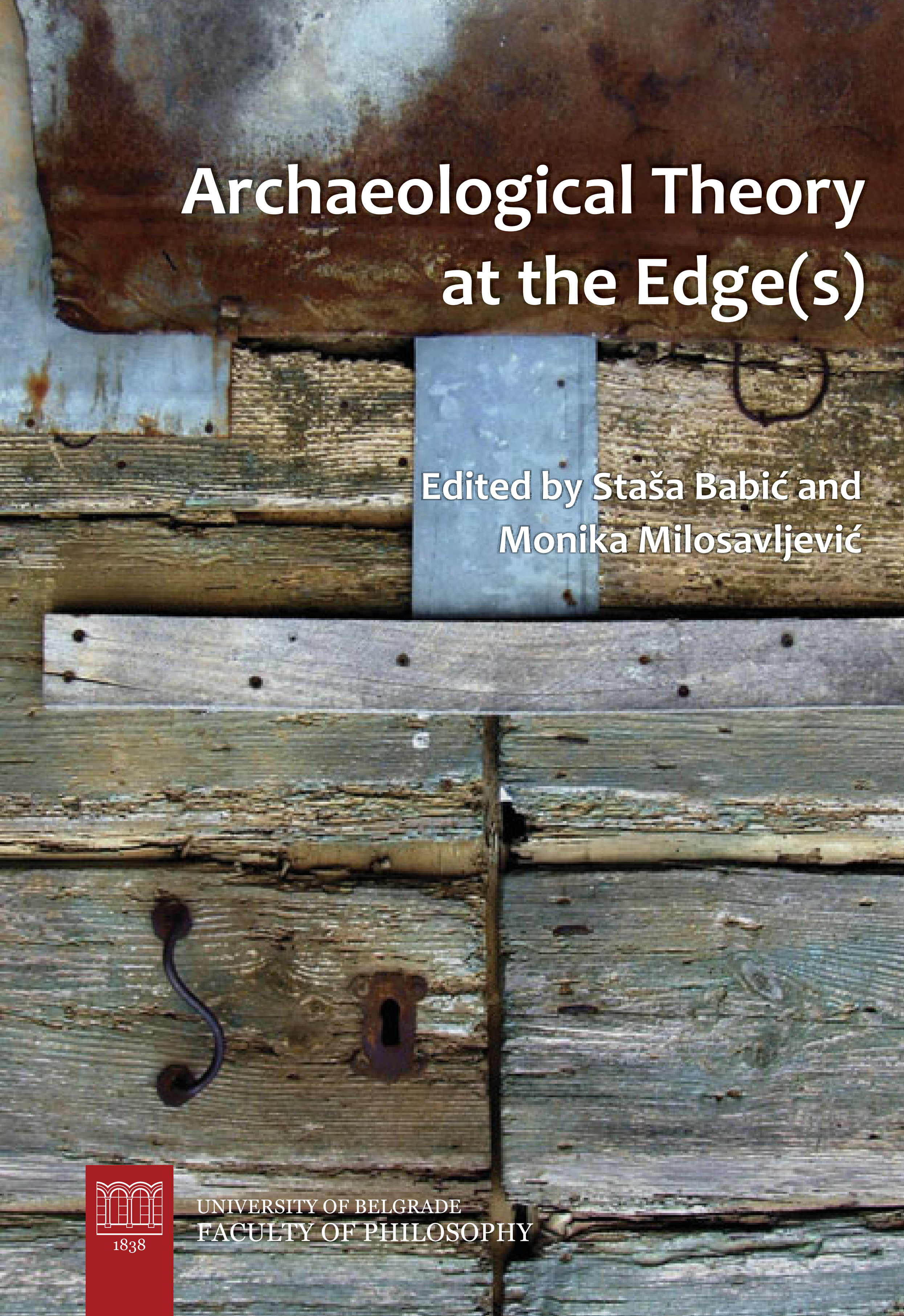


Archaeological Theory at the Edge(s)

Edited by Staša Babić and Monika Milosavljević

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CONTENTS

7 | *Staša Babić*
Archaeological theory at the edge(s)

13 | *Marko Teodorski*
Freud's archaeology

33 | *Selena Vitezović*
Neolithisation of the Balkans: One hundred years of research

55 | *Zorica Kuzmanović*
Self-reflexive turn to ontological debates in archaeology

71 | *Ivan Vranić*
A changing place of Greek black– and red-figure pottery in archaeological method and theory: From evolution of style to entanglement and objects' ontology

89 | *Vladimir D. Mihajlović*
Hegemony and "relational associations" in the Roman Empire

115 | *Ivana Živaljević*
"Inventing" hunter-gatherers (and others): Human-animal relations, narratives, and the diversity of lived experience

135 | *Uroš Matić*
One step forward, two steps back: Egyptology and Third Science Revolution

153 | *Sonja Vuković, Dimitrije Marković, Amalia Sabanov*
Where archaeology and wildlife management meet: The relevance of studying the Holocene history of human-wildlife interactions in the Central Balkans for regional conservation efforts

167 | *Tatjana Cvjetićanin*
Heritage and its communities: The Vinča case

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY AT THE EDGE(S)

This collection presents nine papers dealing with some of the issues currently high on the agenda of theoretical archaeology, written by authors situated *at the edge* – in one of the academic communities usually regarded as (often unwilling) recipients rather than active participants in the debate. The authors are loosely gathered around the Centre for Theoretical Archaeology of the Department of Archaeology, University of Belgrade. This semi-formal group was founded in 2007 as a platform for discussion among teachers and students inclined to challenge the reluctance of the local professional community and to take a more active part in the dialogue on archaeological theory.[1] The volume is the product of the collaboration with the project *Sciences of the Origins*[2], which enabled us to reconsider our own discipline within the wider context of other research fields pursuing explanations of the deep past. This welcome synergy has underscored current archaeological concerns, at a moment when two seemingly contradictory paths are advocated with equal fervour, arguing that archaeology itself is at the edge of radical changes in its epistemic foundations.

Archaeology, as an academic discipline with a distinctive set of premises, was founded relatively late in comparison to other fields of inquiry into the human past, such as history, which boasts its ancestry as far back as Herodotus. This "order of origins" is one of the reasons why researchers into material remains of antiquity are frequently considered to be in a

1 During the 15 years of its activities, the Center has organized a series of round-table discussions, book presentations, and 10 annual conferences (https://bg.academia.edu/CentarzateorijskuarheologijuCTA).

2 The project is supported by the University of Oxford project *New Horizons for Science and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe,* and funded by the John Templeton Foundation (https://sciorigin.weebly.com/).

subordinate position in relation to those working with written evidence. Still, in spite of constant tensions, these two disciplines share many concerns and premises, frequently overlapping with other humanities, such as social anthropology and art history. On the other hand, since its very inception, archaeology has been closely linked to geology, both in terms of its conceptual framework and its practical methods of investigation, based very much on excavations and observations of soil layers. Consequently, the discipline has always incorporated a wide scope of knowledge, derived equally from humanities and exact sciences. Harmonizing such diverse sets of epistemic principles may be a complex task, and during the first half of the 20th century, archaeologists have sporadically discussed the particularities of the study of the past based upon material remains. However, during this *culture-historical* phase in the discipline's history, explicitly theoretical reflections were not remarkably frequent, which was one of the main sources for subsequent critiques. It was only in the 1960s when systematic considerations of archaeological theory were brought to the forefront and the first explicit research programme was formulated, demanding a rigorous scientific procedure purposefully built upon the assumptions of logical positivism. The debate generated by the advent of this *processual approach* has never been unanimously resolved, but only intensified during the 1980s, when its critics, gathered under the label of *post-processual archaeology* and inspired by diverse sources, argued for much closer ties with humanities. However, by the end of the 20th century, none of these approaches prevailed, and culture-historical, processual, and post-processual principles coexisted in the arena of archaeology, albeit not in the most harmonious manner. Furthermore, in the discipline's actual research practice, theoretical concerns have been largely neglected or transformed into a variety of eclectic research strategies. Even though no consensus was reached, the notion prevailed that the *theory wars* (Chapman and Wylie 2016) are over.

The apparent stalemate in the early 2000s solidified the tripartite scheme as the standard organizing principle of archaeological theories, according to which almost all current general overviews and textbooks on the subject have been structured. This heuristic model has indeed played an important role in archaeologists' efforts to think about the epistemic foundations of the discipline. However, presenting the developments in archaeological theory as a steady advance through clearly demarcated solid stages exaggerates the differences between the principles underpinning them, at the expense of a number of unifying elements binding archaeology into a distinct discipline throughout its history (Lucas 2012). The introduction of the concept of *paradigms* into archaeology in the sense pos-

tulated by Thomas Kuhn particularly stressed the tendency to observe the three "units" not as distinct research strategies, but also as distinct *phases of development*, in spite of the fact that a radical and all-encompassing shift in the epistemic foundations of the discipline never actually happened (Lucas 2016).

The corollary to this paradigm-driven approach to the history of archaeological theory is that massive and radical changes are to be expected in the field every twenty years or so. By the beginning of the 21st century, this somewhat unrealistic expectation produced a reverse response in the form of the announcement of *the death of theory* (Thomas 2015), implying that the discipline had reached the stage when its epistemic concerns could be put aside. On the other hand, the widespread introduction of data collecting and processing methods and techniques derived from hard sciences led to the proclamation of a *new scientific revolution* in archaeology (Kristiansen 2014), equal in scope and impact to the previous pivotal events of the 1960s and 1980s. Finally, inspired by a very diverse, sometimes even mutually contradictory string of inspirations from philosophy and social anthropology, a number of authors argue for an *ontological turn* in archaeology, moved by the profound critique of the entire previous epistemic foundations of the discipline (Olsen et al. 2012). Needless to say, none of these recent propositions succeeds in uniting the global archaeological community under the same banner, and the field remains fragmented.

This state of affairs may be extremely disquieting if it is presumed that all archaeologists everywhere need to comply with the same sequence of stages, as postulated by the customary tripartite scheme, now amended by recent developments. However, if we abandon the idea of directional progress of archaeological theory along a uniform trajectory, other outcomes are possible, based upon the premise that good epistemic norms are generated through *collective practices* of scientific communities, rather than abstract normative prescriptions (Fagan 2010, Longino 2002). The propensity of archaeology to assimilate and adapt a vast scope of ideas and solutions from various sources, astutely characterized as *methodological omnivory* (Currie 2018), need not be considered its shortcoming but as a result of its task – to generate knowledge about humans' affairs based upon various forms of materiality – and its unique position at the crossroads of sciences and humanities. It may be argued that the periodically revived debate as to which of these research fields provides more suitable epistemic foundations for archaeology has not been resolved precisely because resolution is not possible, or indeed required. Embracing the role of the research field positioned *at the edge* of both of these strictly separated

arenas may bring *epistemic goods* for archaeology while also enabling it to take a more prominent part in interdisciplinary dialogue.

Finally, if archaeologists choose to meet the challenge of continuous refinement of disciplinary epistemic tools, it will also necessitate the reconsideration of multiple *standpoints* (Harding 1988, Wylie 2003) of its practitioners, based upon the premise that all knowledges, including disciplinary ones, are *situated* in certain circumstances (Haraway 1988). Therefore, voices *from the edges* of the mainstream – the parts of the global archaeological community now mainly relegated to the role of belated newcomers and passive recipients of ready-made solutions (Babić 2023), may offer fresh and challenging insights into current discussions on the future of archaeological theory. The present collection of papers is a modest contribution in this direction.

The authors were invited to assess the current state of the field from their respective areas of expertise and positions in the present landscape of archaeology. Their responses demonstrate their individual preferences for the interdisciplinary connections they consider most productive for their research purposes, from psychoanalysis (Teodorski – Ch. 1), to a rich repertoire of hard-science methods and techniques (Vuković, Marković, Sabanov – Ch. 8). Ivana Živaljević (Ch. 6) reveals the intricacies of those choices and the vast array of factors influencing the researcher's position in relation to a particular task. Selena Vitezović (Ch. 2) lays out an overview of multiple approaches to one of the crucial topics in archaeology throughout its history – Neolithisation. Ivan Vranić (Ch. 4) advocates an approach to Greek painted pottery that includes re-reading traditional interpretations in light of current propositions. Three chapters critically assess the most pronounced recent trends in archaeology: the *ontological turn* (Kuzmanović, Ch. 3, and Mihajlović, Ch. 5) and the emphasis on scientifically driven research (Matić, Ch. 7). Finally, the closing chapter (Cvjetićanin, Ch. 9) addresses the complex issue of communicating the archaeological knowledge to the public and the responsibility of professionals in heritage construction processes.

Our aim has not been to compile a definite overview of present-day archaeological theory. There are certainly many other topics and approaches in archaeology today that are not represented in this volume. The intention has been to exemplify some of the possible responses to ongoing discussions and to argue for a constant renegotiation of our theoretical premises, taking into account the diversity of human experiences and the materialities that accompany them.

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FREUD'S ARCHEOLOGY

Abstract: Archaeology played a critical role in Freud's thinking about the psychoanalytical method. The metaphor he used to describe the unconscious often took the form of "depth," within which psychological contents were "buried," and the psychoanalyst "unearthed" them in order to finally engage in the "reconstruction" of the past. He presented psychic contents as ruins with "buried" foundations that the psychoanalyst could verbally and visually examine, or attack with "picks, shovels and spades." This trope – of psychoanalyst as archaeologist – appears in various forms throughout Freud's oeuvre, raising many questions about the intertwining of psychoanalysis and archeology. Therefore, the guiding question of this paper is: if Freud saw himself as an archaeologist (of the psyche), what kind of archeology did he practice? Can we talk about "Freudian archaeology"? To answer this question, the author articulates a Freud archaeologist – one that never truly existed but is nevertheless born out of the *effects* of his writing.

The paper first presents the topography of the archaeological metaphor, as well as the main points in its critique so far. It then turns to two issues that form the backbone of Freud's archaeology: 1) the role of the psychoanalyst/archaeologist in the analytic/archaeological method; and 2) the psychoanalyst's/archaeologist's relationship to the past in the interpretation of the analytic/archaeological record. It shows that for Freud the psychoanalytic/archaeological was a two-way street: the archeological influenced the formation of his psychoanalytic methodology, but it also changed relative to the methodology's development. Finally, it shows that although Freud did not explicitly develop a theory of material culture, it is nevertheless implicitly present in his texts in a form that goes beyond the archeological imagination of the time and anticipates archeological theories from the end of the 20th century.

Keywords: Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic method, archeology, archeological metaphor, stratigraphy, material culture, epistemology.

In 1971, one of Freud's most famous patients, Sergei Konstantinovitch Pankejeff, aka the Wolf-Man, recalled in his memoirs the father of psychoanalysis and his working apartment. "From the beginning," says Pankejeff,

> I had the impression that Freud had a special gift for finding a happy balance in everything he underwent. This characteristic expressed itself also in the appearance of his home in the Berggasse. I can remember, as though I saw them today, his two adjoining studies, with a little door between them and with their windows opening on a little courtyard. There was always a feeling of sacred peace and quiet here. The rooms themselves must have been a surprise to any patient, for they in no way reminded one of a doctor's office but rather of an archaeologist's study. Here were all kinds of statuettes and other unusual objects, which even the layman recognized as archaeological finds from ancient Egypt. Here and there on the walls were stone plaques representing various scenes of long-vanished epochs. (Wolf-Man 1973, 157)

Among authors interested in Freud's archaeological passion, the passage from Pankejeff's memoirs has become one of those frequently cited and used, just like here, as an introduction to the discussion of the relationship between psychoanalysis and archaeology. From it, we consequently conclude that Freud was infatuated with antiquities and archaeology, so we naturally proceed toward that love. This is because Pankejeff ends his description with a reflection on a problem known in the literature as "Freud's archaeological metaphor." "Freud himself explained his love for archaeology," Pankejeff informs us, "in that the psychoanalyst, like the archeologist in his excavations, must uncover layer after layer of the patient's psyche, before coming to the deepest, most valuable treasures" (Wolf-Man 1973, 157). This trope – of the psychoanalyst as an archaeologist – appeared in various forms throughout Freud's oeuvre, raising many questions about the intertwining of psychoanalysis and archeology, to which much space has been devoted in previous decades (Bernfeld 1951; Bowdler 2010; Byles 2003; Gamwell 1989; Kenaan 2021; Khanna 2003, 33–65; Kofman 1988, 175–200; Kuspith 1989; Shortland 1993; Spence 1987). Most of this criticism deals with issues pertinent to psychoanalysts, Freud's biographers, and historians of ideas, with only a few (Bowdler 2010 and Shortland 1993) dealing with issues pertinent to archaeologists, to which the aforementioned metaphor refers. Moreover, since Freudian (classical) psychoanalysis has never penetrated deeply (or at all) into archaeological theories, archaeologists are mostly unaware of this metaphor. I am of the opinion that, although some of the authors quite eruditely examine the intertwining of psychoanalytic and archaeological disciplines in Freud, there is still room for reflection and furthering of that inquiry.

The guiding question of this text is the following: if Freud saw himself as an archaeologist (of the psyche), what kind of archeology did he practice? Can we refer to it as "Freudian archaeology"? As a response, I will try to articulate a Freud archaeologist, one born out of the *effects* of his archaeological metaphor. Freud was aware of the necessity of figurative expression, as well as its limits (Freud 1920, 60). He thought that it was all right to speculate "so long as we retain the coolness of our judgment and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building" (Freud 1900b, 536). Even his most lavish metaphors of the unconscious, such as historically simultaneous multilayered Rome, serve only to show "how far are we from mastering the characteristics of mental life by representing them in pictorial terms" (Freud 1930, 71). Therefore, the Freud archaeologist of this text never truly existed but only appears as an effect of his own writing.

I will first present the topography of the archaeological metaphor and the main points in its critique so far. I will then turn to two issues that, in my opinion, form the backbone of Freud's archaeology: 1) the role of the psychoanalyst/archaeologist in the analytic/archaeological method; and 2) the psychoanalyst's/archaeologist's relationship to the past in the interpretation of the analytic/archaeological record. I will show that for Freud the psychoanalytic/archaeological was a two-way street: the archeological influenced the formation of his psychoanalytic methodology, but it also changed relative to the methodology's development. Finally, I will show that although Freud did not explicitly develop a theory of material culture, it is nevertheless implicitly present in his texts in a form that goes beyond the archeological imagination of the time and anticipates archeological theories from the end of the 20th century.

Berggase 19, Vienna/archaeological metaphor

Although Pankejeff's description of Freud's office gives us a general picture, it does not convey the true dimension of the mentioned "archaeological collection," nor its exhibitionary capacity. Therefore, let us take a more intimate tour of Freud's workspace.[1]

The apartment at Berggasse 19 consisted of two interconnected rooms: the study where he wrote and held consultations and the other where he conducted analysis. In the study, under the wide windows,

1 Freud's office has been turned into the Sigmund Freud Museum in 1971, located in Vienna, Austria. Attached to the museum are Europe's largest psychoanalytic research library (with 35,000 volumes) and the research institute of the Sigmund Freud Foundation that have been running the museum since 2003.

there was a two-part desk assembled at right angles, and the walls were covered with books up to the ceiling. The visual center of the second room was a couch covered with a Persian rug with high cushions on one side, behind Freud's armchair where, out of the patient's view, he sat during the analytic sessions. A tall clay stove rested in the corner, and the floor was covered with a large Persian carpet. What leaves the strongest impression, however, is the fact that every corner of both rooms contained a figurine made of wood, stone, or metal, a ceramic jar, a stone relief, or a glass display case like the ones we find in museums and archaeological collections. The diverse archaeological findings there ranged from dynastic Egyptian stelae to late antique lamps. Indeed, as Pankejeff says, "[h]ere were all kinds of statuettes and other unusual objects," but they actually took up *all* of the free exhibitionary space; stone reliefs did hang "here and there" on the walls, but the rest were covered with mosaics and reproductions of archaeological sensations. If Freud sat at his desk and looked to the left, towards the window, he could see his reflection in a small mirror; meanwhile, both tables behind him were crammed with figurines (including Thoth's baboon, Imhotep, Isis, and Athena), two African masks hung on the library wall behind him between two crowded glass cases, which were flanked by two red-figured hydrias; the library wall against the window was obscured by another table with figurines, while artifacts lay on the floor everywhere between the display cases and tables. All of the walls in the analysis room (except the one behind the couch) were obscured by stelae and showcases so crowded that the figurines sat *on* them as well, concealing the pictures on the walls.

In Freud's office, wherever the eye turned, it *always looked toward the past*.[2]

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2 In a recent article, Julia Schroeder (2020) analyzes the role of Freud's office in the psychoanalytic process. She notes similarities in the arrangement and decoration of office rooms and Egyptian tombs, especially Tutankhamun's, a comparison that runs through Freud's texts as well. At least half of Freud's collection was Egyptian, and in *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* (Freud 1909, 176) Freud explains to a patient (the Rat-Man) the difference between conscious and unconscious content by pointing to objects in his office, concluding that they were "only objects found in a tomb, and their burial [is] their preservation [...]." What is more interesting, however, is the role of such a space in the psychoanalytic process. Following the contemporary psychoanalytic theory of the "active room" (Danze 2005) and the "active vessel" (Quindonoz 1992), Schroeder shows how Freud's office guided patients to free association and supported the psychoanalytic process of revealing inner contents – everything that surrounded the patients turned them inwards, towards the past and repressed contents with which it was necessary to come into contact. In this context, the mentioned mirror also has the role of looking inside oneself, into the past.

It can be argued that Freud imagined himself as an archaeologist of the human psyche from early on. The metaphor he used to describe the unconscious often made reference to "depth," with psychological contents "buried" in it and the psychoanalyst tasked with "unearthing" them in order to finally engage in the "reconstruction" of the past. He presented psychic contents as ruins with "buried" foundations, which the psychoanalyst could verbally and visually examine, or attack with "picks, shovels and spades" (Freud 1896, 192). During one of his most famous cases, he felt that he had no choice but to follow the example of "those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of day after their long burial the priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity" (Freud 1905a, 12), while a decade earlier he described breaking through the "depths" of the psyche as "excavating a buried city," and doing so "layer by layer" (Freud 1895, 139). Psychic contents, therefore, live buried in the "darkness" of the unconscious, and it is the psychoanalyst's responsibility to bring them to the surface, to the light. These and similar descriptions extend throughout Freud's oeuvre. It is evident, especially in his early texts, that archeology and the archaeological method of excavating the past represent the core of Freud's psychoanalytic imagery, which develops a clear spatial *stratigraphy* and a series of mutually defining *oppositions*. The human mind consists of a *surface (above)* that relates to its *depth (below)*, a darkness in which contents rest waiting for the psychoanalyst/archaeologist to bring them to the *light*.

Why did Freud, at the beginning of his career, use this particular metaphor among many others[3] is one of the questions to which a significant number of authors have devoted attention (Bernfeld 1951; Gamwell 1989, 22; Gay 1988, 170; Jones 1957, 316–19; Kuspith 1989, 135). From a young age, Freud was very attached to antiquity (in high school he got his "first glimpses of an extinct civilization" [Freud 1914, 241]), a love that later found considerable fulfillment in ancient drama and passionate reading of archaeological literature. He began collecting antiquities after his father's death in 1986,[4] and by the time he moved to London in 1938, his collection contained over 2,000 artifacts.[5] He read *Neue Freie Presse* and

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3 In his later texts, for example, he also uses the metaphor of a house with the unconscious as a basement.

4 Some authors emphasize the importance of the death of Freud's father for the formation of his archaeological collection. On the sublimation of Freud's feelings for his father into a collecting impulse, see Bernfeld 1951; Gamwell 1989, 22-26; Shortland 1993, 6-8.

5 According to Peter Gay (1988, 171), one of Freud's biographers, Freud gazed at or caressed objects while sitting at the table. Considering that all these objects referred to the past, Freud actually had a deeply personal, tactile relationship with it.

Illustrierte Kronen-Zeitung (Gamwell 1989, 22) to learn about archaeological discoveries, which he later reflected upon in his texts. He valued archeology so highly that in a letter from February 7, 1931, he reproached Stefan Zweig for simplifying his portrait in *Mental Healers: Mesmer, Eddy and Freud* and omitting important idiosyncrasies such as his passion for smoking, his need (despite his fear of trains) to travel to Rome once a year, his habit of spending considerable sums of money on Greek, Roman, and Egyptian antiquities, and the fact that he "actually read more archeology than psychology" (Freud 1975, 403). This comment is surely exaggerated since Freud read psychological literature thoroughly, but it does speak of an almost physical intensity of passion on a par with smoking, which he was never able to give up.

Freud found a great intellectual role model in Heinrich Schliemann. This fascination has become the main trajectory that his biographers and critics have taken in explaining his archaeological interests, often stopping at the observation that Heinrich Schliemann and the "discovery" of Troy left a strong impression on Freud and provided him with material for further development and use of the archaeological metaphor. Namely, he had at least three books by Schliemann (Botting and Davies 1989, 185) in his library – *Mykena* (1878), *Ilios* (1881), and *Tiryns* (1886). Moreover, in a letter from May 28, 1889, Freud informs Wilhelm Fliess that he had treated himself with *Ilios* and immensely enjoyed the chapter on Schliemann's childhood. "The man was happy when he found Priam's treasure," says Freud (1985, 353), "because happiness comes only with the fulfillment of a childhood wish." Half a year later, in a letter from December 21, Freud (1985, 391–2) states that in his current patient, "[b]uried deep beneath all his fantasies, we found a scene from his primal period (before twenty-two months) which meets all the requirements and in which all the remaining puzzles converge. [...] It is as if Schliemann had once more excavated Troy, which had hitherto been deemed a fable."

Numerous authors draw attention to the role of Heinrich Schliemann in Freud's life, but most observations end up being biographical. Susan Bernfeld (1951, 113) sees Freud's love of archeology as a response to his early preoccupation with death: self-analysis helped Freud unearth his earliest Freiburg years which became his "Pompeii and he became [their] Schliemann"; Lynn Gamwell (1989, 22) discusses the sensationalism of Schliemann's discoveries and their availability to Freud; Wendy Botting and Keats Davies (Botting and Davies 1989) index Schliemann's books in Freud's library; Peter Gay (1988, 172) in his biography of Freud only indicates Schliemann's presence. Few authors question the role of Schliemann's archeology in Freud's metaphor and psychoanalytic method. If Schliemann's archaeological work influenced Freud (as it did), and Freud's

archaeological passion significantly shaped his psychoanalytic imagination, what kind of archeology did Schliemann practice and how did it shape Freud's work?

Michael Shortland (1993, 10–12) addresses some aspects of this issue. He argues that in 1986 (after the death of his father, when he started collecting antiques) Freud recreated his own personality, or, in other words, he created a myth about it based on Schliemann's autobiography. Frank Sulloway (1980) had previously shown that Freud, with the help of his followers, described himself as an archetypal hero who embarked on a multi-stage journey from initial isolation to initiation and return, followed by rejection before achieving fame – a journey identical to Heinrich Schliemann's in his autobiographical chapter of *Ilios*. More interesting, however, than the creation of a myth based on an archeological idol, is the extraordinary similarity of Freud's and Schliemann's interests, as well as their research methods. Shortland points to a mutual preoccupation with fragments that others considered trivial, the strong symbolic interpretability of the psychic and archaeological materials, as well as their mutual reaching for sexuality as an interpretive tool. Both made exaggerated interpretations or even constructed observations from those interpretations and then used them as the basis for their theories.

Freud's frequent admission of his archaeological passion, his growing collection of antiquities, as well as his open admiration for Heinrich Schliemann, created a smokescreen that hid broader contextual reasons for choosing the archeological metaphor. Among the authors who pulled this curtain aside was Donald Kuspith (1989, 133), who made a very interesting argument that the archaeological metaphor was Freud's attempt to integrate psychoanalysis into society and an extremely skillful rhetorical maneuver in which he legitimized his then questionable discipline by using the status of another already accepted one. In the 1890s, psychoanalysis was in its infancy and viewed with suspicion, while archeology was developing into an academic discipline that dazzled audiences with discoveries of ancient civilizations and spoke a language that even the uneducated masses could understand. Shortland's (1993, 8) analysis, on the other hand, is directed towards the backbone of Freud's metaphor and its prevalence at the end of the 19th century – the concept of "depth." "Deep metaphor" (such as buried knowledge, emotional levels, and layered experience) had become a Romantic cliché by the end of the 19th century.[6] Nineteenth-century novels (Gothic especially) abounded with

6 In a book on Wordsworth's aesthetics, for example, Theresa Kelley (1988, 9-10) compares Freud's and Wordsworth's "archaeology," noting, among other things, that both establish a "stratified psychic topography." On archeology and archaeological metaphor in Victorian literature, see Dillon 1993.

undergrounds, caves, and truths hidden in the depths of the earth, while at the same time, sciences (such as geology or volcanology) that used stratigraphy to defy the creationist historical superficiality were emerging.[7] Freud, on the one hand, had at his disposal the entire wealth of German Romanticism (Ziolkowski 1990, 18–63; Shortland 1994) from which he could draw inspiration, while on the other hand, the archaeological method had already been appropriated outside the archaeological discipline; as, for instance, in the Sherlock Holmes novels where Arthur Conan Doyle explains the detective process as archaeological work (During 1993; Shepard 1984).[8]

Examples of the complete naturalization of this metaphor can also be found in Freud's works. In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), for example, Freud's co-author Joseph Breuer talks about the habit of expressing ourselves in "spatial relations" and draws attention to the danger of assuming that "every substantive has a substance behind it," and specifically of using the spatial metaphor of the unconscious below the conscious. "[W]hen we speak of ideas which are found in the region of clear consciousness and of unconscious ones which never enter the full light of self-consciousness," Breuer (Freud 1985, 228) says, "we almost inevitably form pictures of a tree with its trunk in daylight and its roots in darkness, or of a building with its dark underground cellars." However, it is intriguing that, when discussing the metaphor of the tree and the building, Breuer uses the metaphor of *light* (which the unconscious ideas never really enter) without recognizing it as such at all. The light that emerges from darkness is so naturalized that it is no longer seen as a figure.

Although at first glance it seems that without the archaeological metaphor psychoanalysis would not even be possible, a broader view of the problem shows that the psychoanalytic/archaeological imagination is part of wider epistemic structures.

It is important to note that, when viewed within the framework of the texts in which it appears, the archaeological metaphor does not have the same weight everywhere and Freud uses it differently: while it is sometimes a pure illustration of the psychoanalytic method (*Aetiology of Hysteria*), other times it is the problem itself (*Construction in Analysis*). It changes form, complexity, and capacities over time, reflecting changes in

7 Theoretical bases for stratigraphy were first established in geology by Nicolas Steno in 1669 (the "law of superposition," the "principle of original horizontality," and the "principle of lateral continuity") and later developed into a concept by William Smith and used by 19th century archaeologists.

8 Since, however, Freud applies the idea of stratification to the human psyche, namely to the inner psycho-emotional life, it is important to mention that in this form the idea could precede geology and lead toward discussions about the soul in Christianity.

psychoanalytic theory and method. Freud initially approached it enthusiastically and uncritically, but he eventually drew clear boundaries between its elements. Because we have embarked on understanding what kind of archeology Freud practiced, it is necessary to step beyond the visual topography of his metaphor (questions of depth, or stratigraphy) and think about the implications of its use in his texts. This primarily involves its epistemology – the role of the psychoanalyst/archaeologist in understanding the psychic material/archaeological record.

Psychoanalyst/archaeologist

In the aforementioned book, *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer explain to an extremely skeptical audience the procedure for treating hysterical patients. According to their definition, hysterical patients (mostly women) were individuals in whom a psychological problem appeared in the form of a physical symptom. Therefore, they believed that accessing and working on the problematic psychic content (its proper understanding by the patient) would cure the physical symptoms of the disease. "This procedure was one," explains Freud,

> of clearing away the pathogenic psychical material layer by layer, and we liked to compare it with the technique of excavating a buried city. I would begin by getting the patient to tell me what was known to her and I would carefully note the points at which some train of thought remained obscure or some link in the causal chain seemed to be missing. And afterwards I would penetrate into deeper layers of her memories at these points by carrying out an investigation under hypnosis or by the use of some similar technique. The whole work was, of course, based on the expectation that it would be possible to establish a completely *adequate set of determinants for the events concerned*. I shall discuss presently the methods used for the *deep investigation*. (Freud 1895, 139, italics by the author)

At the very beginning of his psychoanalytic career, Freud developed a "depth" method based on vertical stratigraphy in which the physical level (the symptom, the visible) is on the surface, while the psychic content (the cause, the invisible) is located in the depth. This stratigraphy, according to Freud himself, is based on the assumption that it is possible to draw an unambiguous and direct connection between them, and thus that each symptom on the surface (such as the vagueness or illogicality of the narrative, as well as the physical manifestation) refers to *a specific set* of psychological contents at a deeper level. In this way, the psychoanalyst not only removes layer by layer of psychic material, but also organizes it into adequate sets, or precisely defined units.

Although the psychoanalyst/archaeologist is not mentioned in *Studies on Hysteria*, the reference to the archaeological method is unquestionable and Freud would confirm it a year later in an address to the Association of Psychiatrists and Neurologists in Vienna, titled *Aetiology of Hysteria* (1896). Speaking about the impossibility of believing the patient's narrative of the disease and the necessity of in-depth research, the metaphor now gains in complexity and directly refers to the work of archaeologists and ethnologists. "Imagine," says Freud,

> that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view, with questioning the inhabitants – perhaps semi-barbaric people – who live in the vicinity, about what tradition tells them of the history and meaning of these archaeological remains, and with noting down what they tell him – and he may then proceed on his journey. But he may act differently. He may have brought picks, shovels and spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. *If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries are self-explanatory*: the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or a treasure-house; the fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple; the numerous inscriptions, which, by good luck, may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and, when they have been deciphered and translated, yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past, to commemorate which the monuments were built. *Saxa loquuntur*! (Freud 1896, 192, italics by the author)

Since we are exploring Freud the archaeologist through the implications of his metaphor, we must now turn our attention to the *results* of his archaeology. According to the metaphor, if the archaeological work is successful, "the discoveries are self-explanatory." What does this mean? In the remainder of the address, Freud explains that the success of the depth method is reflected in finding a buried psychic cause that fulfills two conditions: it can "serve as a determinant" and it possesses the necessary "traumatic force" (Freud 1896, 193). In other words, it is semantically tied to a physical symptom (if the symptom is vomiting, the cause must be an image that produces disgust, such as a dead body) and must be strong enough (rotten fruit, although it causes disgust, is not a strong enough impression). However, because the patient's narrative of their own illness cannot be trusted, the final decision about which impression *is* suitable and which *is* strong enough remains with the analyst. Archaeological work is therefore crowned with success when

it discovers an image of the past whose parameters have already been determined beforehand making the discovery *self-explanatory*. The psychoanalyst/archaeologist has complete control over the hermeneutics of the analysis/archaeological record. In the same manner in which Schliemann searched within the archaeological record for an already predetermined image of Troy and decided which layer of the tel was adequate (that is, suitable to serve as a determinant), Freud within the analytically (discursively) constructed unconscious of the patient searched for the impression that would correspond to the semantic conditions that he himself defined. In the clear manner of culture-historical archaeology, which does not question the role of the archaeologist in the interpretation of the material and which in the archaeological record assumes adequate sets of determinants for each cultural unit,[9] early Freud digs into the patient's unconscious in search of self-evident discoveries.

The lecture *Aetiology of Hysteria* thus raises the question of psychoanalysts' role or participation in the construction of analysis results (psychic impressions) but also of archaeologists' role in the construction of the archaeological record. The psychoanalyst digs through the patient's unconscious, layer by layer, searching for what they know they must find. There is no dialogue with the material itself – its nature is predetermined.

In the following years, Freud significantly changed his approach.[10] In 1901, while working on *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and reading Greek archeology (Freud 1985, 427), he analyzed another one of his famous patients – Dora – and wrote the *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905). "I now let the patient himself choose," says Freud,

9 On the history, development, and premises of culture historical archaeology, and especially on the importance of ethnicity in its straightforward and epistemically non-questioned translation into cultural groups, see Trigger 1996, 211-313.

10 In the controversial book *Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (1984), Jeffrey Masson argues that Freud deliberately suppressed his previous "seduction theory," which traced the cause of hysteria to childhood sexual abuse. The reason, according to Masson, was not that the theory was wrong, but that Freud did not want to believe in the sexual abuse of children in the family. The theory that replaced it claimed that the patients had actually *fantasized* about the abuse as children, which was just as influential as if it had actually happened. This completely changed the psychoanalyst's relationship to the patient (whose testimony could no longer be trusted) and therefore also to the analytic/archaeological record. Freud publicly renounced his previous theory in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905b). Bowdler (2010, 424) notes well that after this change, Freud stopped using active participation phrases of "setting the inhabitants to work" or "together with them" that were featured in the lecture *Aetiology of Hysteria*. Michael Shortland (1993, 10) argues that the change in theory reflected directly on the archaeological metaphor that introduced it. On Masson's book controversy, see Malcolm 1984.

> the subject of the day's work, and in that way I start out from whatever surface his unconscious happens to be presenting to his notice at the moment. But on this plan everything that has to do with the clearing-up of a particular symptom emerges piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separated periods of time. In spite of this apparent disadvantage, the new technique is far superior to the old, and indeed there can be no doubt that it is the only possible one. In face of the incompleteness of my analytic results, I had no choice but to follow the example of those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of day after their long burial the priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity. I have restored what is missing, taking the best models known to me from other analyses; but, like a conscientious archaeologist, I have not omitted to mention in each case where the authentic parts end and my constructions begin (Freud 1905a, 12, my italics).

If we compare this passage to the passage from *Studies on Hysteria*, we notice a clear shift in Freud's archeological metaphor. The stratigraphy of the psyche is now more complicated; the record appears in fragments and is defined by temporal contexts. It is no longer direct, it cannot be interpreted straightforwardly, and a set of characteristics no longer corresponds to a single symptom (the system of cultural groups is no longer adequate). There is a clear awareness of the incompleteness of the record, and being a conscientious archaeologist, Freud separates authentic parts from constructions. The role of the psychoanalyst/archaeologist has changed. He now enters into a dialogue with the material of the analytical/archaeological record, because the previous method – the method of self-evident results – has proved to be incomplete. Freud develops a sense of the limits of his metaphor (which he will only draw towards the end of his life), but those limits still correspond to the limits of the depth method itself. In a way, Freud the archaeologist grows through the succession of the use of the metaphor, becoming more aware of his own possibilities and, more importantly, of the inevitability of his own influence on the archaeological record. Although still oriented towards authentic parts and positivism, which he would never abandon, in the *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* Freud distinguished between authenticity and construction.[11]

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11 Freud's understanding of the "scaffolding" of psychoanalysis puts it close to modern and recent archaeological approaches. His opinion that it is all right to speculate "so long as we retain the coolness of our judgment and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building" (Freud 1900b, 536) resonates with Robert Chapman's and Alison Wiley's (Chapman and Wiley 2016, 6) that "[m]aterial evidence is inescapably an interpretive construct; what it 'says' is contingent on the provisional scaffolding we bring to bear." See also Currie 2017.

Contrary to the prevailing opinion that Freud's psychoanalytic method was built according to archeological models, the above examples indicate that Freud's archeology actually shifted according to the psychoanalytic method. Although opposed, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive, but speak of the semantic openness of the metaphor and of the loss of clear boundaries between the signifier and the signified. To the question of whether in Freud archeology metaphorically marked psychoanalysis or psychoanalysis archaeology, the answer is: yes. A metaphor is a two-way street. Despite being paranoid by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's criteria (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003, 123–151), Freud's theory was always open at the edges, or, in David Wills' (1995, 92–129) terms, prosthetic.

Material truth/culture

Freud constantly moves between acknowledging the discursiveness of psychic processes and the analytical method on the one hand, and searching for the objective cause of those processes on the other. His work with patients is based on associations and speech, with dream interpretation (as a key psychoanalytic method) inextricably linked to language; all that discursiveness, however, is the work of the censorship of the unconscious, and behind it persists authentic, non-discursive psychic content. But what kind of content? "What we are in search of," says Freud, "is a picture of the patient's forgotten years that shall alike be trustworthy and in all essential respects complete" (Freud 1938, 258). The relationship between these poles – the buried but non-discursive past and the discursiveness of the unconscious – explicitly preoccupied Freud in the last years of his life, and is critical for understanding his archaeology, because it articulates his relationship with the possibilities of reconstructing the past from the analytical/archaeological record.

In 1938, Freud publishes *Construction in Analysis*, a text that more explicitly than any other deals with the archaeological method and harnesses the potential of an archaeological metaphor. He begins by asserting that the psychoanalytic work of reconstructing a picture of the forgotten years and that of the excavation of an ancient building are "in fact identical" (Freud 1938, 259) but that the psychoanalyst is in a better position than the archaeologist because the object of their search is still alive. The proceeding argument presents difficulties in archaeological and psychoanalytic work (questionable age of finds and stratigraphy) and again establishes the advantage of the psychoanalyst who has a patient at their disposal and whose behavior and reactions give them additional information about they material he wants to reconstruct. But the core of Freud's

comparison of psychoanalysis and archeology is that the ancient edifice the archaeologist is looking for has inevitably already been destroyed and the only thing left for them is to carry out a more or less faithful reconstruction; on the other hand, the psychic structure (the picture of the lost years) still exists, only distorted and inaccessible to the patient. In psychoanalysis, according to Freud,

> we are regularly met by a situation which with the archaeological object occurs only in such rare circumstances as those of Pompeii or of the tomb of Tut'ankhamun. All of the essentials are preserved; even things that seem completely forgotten are present somehow and somewhere, and have merely been buried and made inaccessible to the subject. Indeed, it may, as we know, be doubted whether any psychical structure can really be the victim of total destruction. It depends only upon analytic technique whether we shall succeed in bringing what is concealed completely to light. (Freud 1938, 260)

Bringing to the light (and then reconstructing) is the goal of the archaeological enterprise, but psychoanalytic work only begins here. "[P]sychical objects are incomparably more complicated than the excavator's material ones and [...] we have insufficient knowledge of what we may expect to find," concludes Freud, and therefore "comparison between the two forms of work can go no further than this" (Freud 1938, 260).

Freud's belief in the indestructibility of impressions in the unconscious (and therefore in the possibility of their return) is unshakeable. Already in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* he claims that once perceived, an impression remains forever in the unconscious (Freud 1900a, 20), and forty years later in *Moses and Monotheism* he illustrates the timelessness of the unconscious with the example of a photographic film that can be developed into an image regardless of the elapsed time period (Freud 1920, 126). In *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, Freud claims to have "restored what [was] missing," like an archaeologist bringing to light "priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity" (Freud 1905a, 12), while in a letter to Fliss from December 21, 1899, he claims that in the patient, buried beneath all phantasies, he "found a scene from his primal period" in which "all the remaining puzzles converge" (Freud 1985, 391), and then proceeds to compare it to the discovery of Troy. *Construction in Analysis*, therefore, raises the question of the relationship of the psychoanalyst/archaeologist to the analytical/archaeological record, but also to the indestructibility of the past and its manifestation in that record. From this point on, we can no longer speak of Freud the psychoanalyst/archaeologist, since he draws the line between their capacities. I am of the opinion that at this point Freud's psychoanalytic method surpassed what could have been possibily thought about archaeology at the time.

Namely, although traces and forerunners of that question can be found in his earlier texts (Freud 1927, 44; Freud 1932, 191; Freud 1935, 78), in his final years (particularly in *Moses and Monotheism*) Freud increasingly distinguished between "historical" and "material" truths. Historical truth is an objective event (image, impression) from the past, i.e., a semantically adequate and sufficiently intense *cause*; whereas material truth is a *symptom* – a manifestation of that cause in the present, "mutilated" so as to retain its intensity and meaning but not its form. Historical truth is *ex profundis*, from the depths and timeless – it is repressed and must not emerge in its original form, but it nevertheless returns to the surface and light as material truth in a process that Freud calls "the return of the repressed."[12] By the time he wrote *Construction in Analysis* in 1938, Freud had been writing on anthropological and cultural topics for decades, had already published *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), was in the process of writing *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), had already made an onto-phylogenetic leap, and had transferred the psychoanalytic method from the individual to the community.[13] In such a context, historical truth appears as the incessant return of long-repressed layers of social or collective consciousness (Freud 1939, 130–3).[14]

My strongest interest here is to see how these two (or three if we include the "return of the suppressed") terms implicitly articulate Freud's understanding of the archaeological record and a theory of material culture. An archaeological find (as an object, a thing) is an external surface and a "material" truth, connected to the indestructible past ("historical" truth) by a semantic and discursive tie. Differentiating between the conscious and the unconscious in a conversation with another one of his famous patients (the Rat-Man), Freud explains that "everything conscious [is] subject to a process of wearing-away, while what [is] unconscious [is] relatively unchangeable" (Freud 1909, 176) and illustrates this by pointing to the antiquities in his room. Here the word "relatively" has a specific meaning: that which persists from the past but has been changed by the present. In Freud's archeological metaphor, material culture represents the symptom and the surface, the material truth and the "disfigured" face of the past which is one, non-discursive, and unchanging.

12 For a brief overview of the concept of the "return of the repressed" in Freud, see Teodorski 2021b, 870-71.

13 On Ernst Haeckel's influence on Freud and his view of the relationship between ontogeny and phylogeny, see Gould 1977. On Freud's cultural works and their influence on anthropology, see Birth 1997; Bowdler 2010; Hiatt 1974; Kluckhohn 1944 and 1956; Wallace 1983.

14 On the importance of this concept in Serbian archaeology, anthropology, and (paleo) balkanology, see Teodorski 2021a and 2021b.

Material culture is thus a developed photograph of the unconscious.

Had it been aware of itself as such, Freudian archeology would have approached material culture discursively in the style of the last decades of the 20th century. Freud's description of the ruins in *Aetiology of Hysteria*, which the researcher approaches with "picks, shovels and spades," triumphantly ends with "*saxa loquuntur*!" – the stones speak. The objects do not indicate or simply are; they *speak*, the archaeological record *speaks*, as do his patients. Freud's archeology was as discursive as psychoanalysis itself.

The moment this distinction between historical and material truth became clearly defined in Freud's work marked the end of his use of the archaeological metaphor. Until then, psychoanalysis and archeology were one and the same science, oriented to different materials, but "in fact identical." The psychoanalyst was an archaeologist. It happened, however, that Freud was able to handle the discursiveness of psychoanalytic material (because it constantly returned "to the surface") but not that of archaeological material. At that time in the history of the archaeological discipline, such a demand was epistemically impossible.

Freud's psychoanalytical and archaeological methods developed side by side and shaped each other for decades. The psychoanalytic method then made a leap that archeology could not follow, so Freud felt it necessary to draw a line between them. The ultimate question is thus not what Freud's archeology *was*, but what it *might have been*. The answer: decades ahead of its time.

But Freud was a psychoanalyst, not an archaeologist.

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NEOLITHISATION OF THE BALKANS: ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF RESEARCH

Abstract: The Neolithisation process marks one of the most dramatic changes in human past. The long history of research on the origins of the Neolithic way of life, its characteristics, and ways of spreading and adopting includes diverse theoretical and methodological frameworks. Differences in the focus of research may also be noted – while some studies emphasized the economy and subsistence, others paid more attention to the symbolic realms and cultural change. In recent decades, interdisciplinary approaches have brought new directions for research activities as well as new data, such as new, refined absolute dates, ancient DNA, and stable isotope analyses of human and animal remains.

The Balkan area is particularly important for understanding the spread and adaptation of the so-called "Neolithic package," with the first studies of the Balkan Early Neolithic conducted as early as the first decades of the 20th century. Recent studies demonstrated that there was a change in population during the Early Neolithic, limiting previous debates on the local vs. imported "Neolithic package," but also raising questions about the mechanisms of spreading and adopting as well as adapting the Neolithic way of life. This paper will present a critical overview of some of the key studies of the Neolithisation process in prehistoric archaeology in Serbia, as well as current trends and possible future directions for research. Among the insufficiently explored topics are the characteristics and changes in the so-called "Neolithic package" and its adaptations that took place within the Balkan area – such as changes in technological choices, raw material selection and management, or changes in symbolic value and the meaning of some of the elements of material culture.

Keywords: Neolithisation, Neolithic way of life, Neolithic archaeology, history of research

Introduction

The Neolithic period represents a time when the most dramatic and profound changes to human societies took place. The transition from hunting and gathering to food production, or domestication of plants and animals, is usually considered the most important Neolithic trait. Other changes are also included in the "Neolithic package,"[1] such as sedentary way of life and the emergence of the first permanent settlements (villages). The introduction of Neolithic features affected all aspects of human life, not only subsistence and diet and the related new daily tasks and activities (along with associated tools and other elements of material culture), but also relationships with the animal world and surrounding landscapes, habitation patterns, as well as worldviews, ritual and religious practices, and symbolic domains (see Whittle 1996).

Although *Neolithic* is a chronological term, used for the period of the Early Holocene between hunting and foraging subsistence and the introduction of metallurgy, the "Neolithic way of life" implies not only technological and economic changes but also socio-cultural and ideological ones among communities labelled as "Neolithic" (Fowler et al. 2015, Whittle 1996).

Approaches to Neolithisation in south-eastern Europe: An overview

The long history of research on the origins of the Neolithic way of life, its characteristics, and ways of spreading and adopting, includes diverse theoretical and methodological frameworks. In fact, every school of archaeological thought contributed to the research of the Neolithic transition – various studies were presented, following culture-historical, processual, and post-processual paradigms, with differences in the research focus – with some studies emphasizing the economy and subsistence, and others paying more attention to the symbolic realms and cultural changes (see below; for other overviews, see also Barker 2005, 1–41; Bellwood

1 The term "Neolithic package" usually denotes major characteristics of the Neolithic period: domesticated plants and animals and specific, related material culture (ceramics, agricultural tools, etc.). The term itself is controversial as there are numerous discussions on how this "package" was transferred from south-western Asia to other parts of Europe, what the "package" contained, whether it was homogenous or not, if it was accepted as a "package" or not, and whether it was a "package" at all (see Çilingiroğlu 2005 and references therein). In this paper, the term "Neolithic package" refers to the assumed set of Neolithic traits in the widest sense.

2005, 19 ff.; Simmons 2010, 10–29; Tasić 2009, 15–24, and references therein).[2]

The manner, rate, and mechanisms of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition are still a matter of discussion, even controversy, since this is an important debate with not only historical and anthropological but also political implications (Budja 1999, 119; Zvelebil 1995, 107). As Marek Zvelebil noted: "Historically, the transition to Neolithic addresses the origin and constituent elements of the Neolithic and subsequent cultures in Europe. Anthropologically, it addresses the transformation of material cultures, the process of diffusion, interaction and adoption and their recognition in the archaeological record. Politically, it raises the question of European cultural identity, and the genetic and linguistic roots of most present-day Europeans." (Zvelebil 1995, 107).

Particularly significant for the initiation of Neolithisation studies was the work of V. Gordon Childe (Childe 1925; 1951 [1936]). It was G. Childe who first coined the term "Neolithic revolution" in his book *Man Makes Himself* (Childe 1951 [1936]), along with the term "urban revolution," and he defined both Neolithic and urban cultures in the Near East as economically-based revolutions (see Gathercole 2004). He chose the word *revolution* to emphasize the importance as well as the degree of changes introduced by the Neolithic way of life. Childe noted: "The steps by which man's control was made effective have been gradual, their effects cumulative. But among them we may distinguish some which (...) stand out as revolutions." (Childe 1951 [1936], 51) Although the usage of the term *revolution* was influenced by his ideological inclinations, namely influences from Marxist theories (see Gathercole 2004), it was further adopted by other scholars (e.g., Braidwood 1960; also, Sherratt provided the concept of "secondary product revolution" – Sherratt 1981) and, overall, this term had a strong impact on studies of the human past in general (see Greene 1999).

P. Gathercole considers that "much of Child's work is now primarily of historical interest" (Gathercole 2004, 28–29); however, Childe's work is very important for the initiation of the debate on how, why, and where the Neolithic way of life was created and how it became predominant in Eurasia. In addition, he contributed significantly to the recognition of southwestern Asia as the area where the domestication of plants and animals actually took place.

2 Providing a detailed, full overview of all of the different approaches to Neolithisation would require a large book and is beyond the scope of this paper. Since this paper is focused on studies of Neolithisation in prehistoric archaeology in Serbia, this overview is limited to the selected, most relevant approaches.

Regarding the factors that contributed to the emergence of the Neolithic economy and its acceptance, Childe adopted the so-called *Oasis Theory* (Childe 1951 [1936]). This theory is based on environmental factors – it assumes that the climate got drier and communities moved into oases where they domesticated animals and plants as means of overcoming the food shortage (see also Barker 2005, 9 ff.).

The *Oasis Theory* was in particular criticised by Robert Braidwood, who initiated very important archaeological research in south-western Asia and proposed the so-called *Hilly Flanks Theory* (Braidwood 1960; also Barker 2005, 18–26). Since modern wild cereals, sheep, and goats were all upland species, the argument was that they would have been domesticated in the hills and not the plains. Furthermore, pollen analyses suggested that the climate during the Early Holocene was, in fact, wetter. Braidwood excavated the site of Jarmo in Iraq, where he discovered the Aceramic Neolithic and sedentary communities, which subsisted on hunting and foraging. Braidwood's initial hypothesis was that the environmental change during the Pleistocene-Holocene transition was a significant factor in the adoption of farming; however, his excavation findings led him to conclude that the reasons must have been cultural (Braidwood 1960; Braidwood, Howe 1960) – food production did not emerge earlier because "culture was not yet ready to achieve it" (Braidwood, Howe 1960, 342).

Environmental factors, combined with demographic pressure, were central to the theories offered by processual archaeologists. Although a major part of his work was devoted to hunter-gatherer communities, Lewis Binford also offered his views on the Neolithic transition. Binford shared similar views with Kent Flannery, and they both considered population growth the main factor leading to the invention and adoption of agriculture (Binford 1968; 1983, 208; Flannery 1969; 1973). Increasing population densities among relatively sedentary fishers and foragers who occupied favourable coastal zones led to an outflow of people into marginal zones, resulting in the cultivation of plants to ensure sufficient food supplies. According to Flannery, the initial plant cultivation would have most likely taken place on the edges of the wild ranges of the plants that were to be domesticated, because supply stress would be higher here than in their core areas (Flannery 1969). Flannery also proposed the "broad spectrum revolution" model, namely, that Early Holocene communities exploited a wider variety of species, which eventually led to domestication (Flannery 1969). Binford in particular outlined the importance of sedentism, noting that increased sedentism of communities that exploited aquatic resources "seems to have anticipated the adoption of agriculture" (Binford 1983, 212).

Processual archaeology deeply impacted research activities on the origins of the Neolithic way of life, especially the increase in archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological studies of early domesticated plants and animals (e.g., papers in Ucko, Dimbleby eds. 1969).

Further debates on the Neolithic also included questions about the timeframe, namely, when the process of domestication began, as well as whether there were single or multiple origins of domesticated plants and animals, and overall whether these two occurred at the same time and the same place. Eric Higgs and Michael Jarman (Higgs, Jarman 1969) showed that animal domestication began developing already in the Pleistocene, as human groups gradually refined their hunting and husbandry practices. Frank Hole (1984) suggested that the domestication of plants and animals was not simultaneous, and probably took place at different locations. According to him, domestication in the Near East was a two-part, two-stage sequence that involved separate processes. He also considers domestication "essentially a social phenomenon involving human, animal and plant societies" (Hole 1984, 57).

Post-processual critique shifted the focus of research to social factors and symbolic aspects of the "Neolithic way of life." Barbara Bender was among the first scholars to note the importance of the social context of the transition from foraging to farming (Bender 1978). Ian Hodder argued that prehistoric societies did not operate wholly as *Homo economicus* and that their economic decisions were not always the most cost-effective ones (Hodder 1982, 1986). Hodder also focused on symbolic evidence from the Early Neolithic communities in Anatolia and Europe, arguing that socioeconomic changes cannot be properly understood without symbolism. According to Hodder, the concept of "domus," or the house and the home, was the most important part of social and economic transformations as well as the "domestication of the society" (Hodder 1990).

Hodder was heavily influenced by the works of Jacques Cauvin, particularly the book *Naissance des divinités, naissance de l'agriculture*. The book critiques ecological and climate models, arguing that rituals and belief systems were crucial for the emergence of Neolithic societies. The Neolithic period brought about not only changes in the economy but also significant changes in worldviews (Cauvin 2010 [1997]).

Curtis Runnels and Tjeerd H. van Andel (1988) suggested that trade played an important part in the spread and adoption of agriculture in the Mediterranean. In contrast to views that agriculture led to the development of complex societies, they hold that it was the other way around – the evolution of complex societies caused the emergence of agriculture. They argue that agriculture was initially practiced because it supplied

some communities in appropriate environments with storable and portable commodities that could be converted into wealth through trade via already existing exchange networks. The domesticates, in fact, provided surplus wealth for trade, or supported craftsmen who produced goods for trade (Runnels, van Andel 1988).

Brian Hayden proposed that feasting was the force behind the intensification of production that eventually led to the domestication of plants and animals; i.e., that the first luxury foods primarily used in feasting were domesticated plants and animals (Hayden 2003; 2009).

The debate regarding Neolithic characteristics and Neolithisation is still very alive in European archaeology (e.g., Bailey et al. eds. 2005; Price ed. 2000; Thomas 2002); these discussions also include the origins of the Neolithic and the mechanisms of its spreading (e.g., Dolukhanov et al. 2005; Grębska-Kulow, Zidarov 2021; Özdoğan 2016; Schulting, Borić 2017), as well as questions about what the "Neolithic package" was and what were the influences from south-western Asia (e.g., Sidéra 1998; Perlès 2005) (see also, Ammerman, Biagi eds. 2003; Budja ed. 1995; Lichter ed. 2005, *inter al.*). The very term *Neolithic* is also being debated (see an overview in Fowler et al. 2015; for the term *Neolithisation*, see Zvelebil 1995). For the majority of scholars, the Neolithic is not only a chronological phase but also a form of social organisation (Fowler et al. 2015, 4; Thomas 2015; Kristiansen 2015).

Recent advances in studies of archaegenomics, stable isotopes, and the overall increase of analyses of absolute dates have provided new data regarding population movements (e.g., Bramanti et al. 2009; Mathieson et al. 2018), but also raised new questions regarding the new populations' relationships with Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and the mechanisms of their movements.

The Neolithisation process in the Balkans is a critical issue in the wider European discussion on Neolithic origins. This paper will provide an overview of some of the most important studies of the Neolithisation process in prehistoric archaeology in Serbia, as well as propose possible future directions for research.

Early Neolithic and Neolithisation studies in Serbia in the 20th century

The end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century also marked, among other things, the beginning of scientific archaeological research on the Neolithic period in Serbian prehistoric archaeology (see Srejović 1988, 5 ff. and references therein). Miloje Vasić, a professor at the Univer-

sity of Belgrade, excavated the site of Jablanica near Mladenovac in 1899, which was later attributed to Neolithic Vinča culture[3] (Vassits 1902), and soon after, in 1906, began excavations at the Vinča – Belo Brdo site in the vicinity (present-day suburb) of Belgrade (Vasić 1932; see also Srejović 1988). The excavations of the Vinča site soon proved to be one of the most important archaeological research projects in Serbian prehistoric archaeology, not just because of the extraordinary archaeological material they yielded and the attention they received both in Serbia and Europe, but also because they initiated a long discussion about the site's interpretation and deeply influenced fieldwork methods and overall archaeology practice in Serbia (see, among others, Palavestra 2020, and references therein).

The first research on the Neolithic in Serbia was thus focused on the Vinča culture, but the Late Neolithic period would continue to be more predominant in research projects than the Early Neolithic into the 20th century.[4] Studies of the Early Neolithic began somewhat later and were overall more modest and received less attention. The beginning of Early Neolithic archaeological research may be linked with the discovery of the Starčevo-Grad site near Pančevo, Banat. The archaeological material discovered by chance at Starčevo during the activities of the brick factory there was brought to the National Museum in Belgrade, after which Miodrag Grbić, curator of the National Museum, started small-scale excavations in 1928 (Grbić 1930; see also Aranđelović-Garašanin 1954; Bandović 2019, 58 ff.). Seven pits were studied, yielding interesting results and attracting international interest. In 1931–1932, excavations were carried out by a Yugoslav-American team. From the American side, archaeologists Vladimir Fewkes, Hetty Goldman, and Robert Ehrich, and institutions of the University Museum in Philadelphia and Peabody and Foggart museums of the Harvard University were involved in the research (Aranđelović-Garašanin 1954). However, research activities were not continued as planned due to the untimely death of V. Fewkes (and perhaps other factors contributed as well), and Starčevo never came close to Vinča in terms of the duration and overall size of the excavations, despite the importance of its rich archaeological remains. In the following years, Starčevo culture

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3 The concept of archaeological cultures was very important for studies of the Neolithic in Serbia throughout the 20th century, and is still extensively used today.

4 Vinča culture sites are better researched in terms of the number of sites and the overall excavated area (see individual Neolithic sites in Srejović ed. 1988), and there are more publications on them. While there are several monographs on the Vinča culture sites (such as Banjica, Supska, Gradac – see references in Srejović ed. 1988), there is not a single monograph on any exclusively Starčevo culture site, only monographs on multi-layered sites such as Grivac (Bogdanović 2004) or Divostin (MacPherron, Srejović eds. 1988).

layers were discovered at other sites as well, including Bubanj near Niš, Vučedol near Vukovar, and others (see Aranđelović-Garašanin 1954, 8 and references therein).

The findings recovered from Starčevo–Grad from the Yugoslav-American campaign were left unpublished in the National Museum until the 1950s, when Draga Aranđelović-Garašanin started analyses on the material for her PhD. Her dissertation was subsequently published in the book *Starčevačka kultura* (*The Starčevo Culture* – Aranđelović-Garašanin 1954). It should be noted that this book remains the only monograph solely devoted to the Starčevo culture during the 20th century. D. Aranđelović-Garašanin provided an overview of the data available about the Starčevo culture at the time, including a list of known sites, an overview of habitation patterns and mortuary practices, a brief analysis of portable findings other than ceramics, with a large part of the book devoted to pottery from Starčevo and relative and absolute chronology. However, neither the origins of the Starčevo culture nor the Neolithisation process were discussed.

In the introductory paper in the edited volume *Neolit centralnog Balkana* (*Neolithic of the Central Balkans*), Jovan Glišić (Glišić 1968) discussed the emergence and origins of the Neolithic in the Balkans (*Postanak i poreklo neolitske ekonomike u kontinentalnim delovima Balkana* – Glišić 1968, 21–23). The Neolithic economy was defined by Glišić as the presence of a sedentary way of life, the beginning of agriculture and animal husbandry, accompanied by the presence of groundstone tools and ceramic objects in material culture (Glišić 1968, 21). He also noted that the transition to agriculture and animal husbandry implies that hunter-gatherer communities had to achieve a certain level of socio-economic development for plant cultivation and animal domestication to become the only solution for more secure subsistence and economy. He stated that there were no local predecessors to the domesticated plants and animals and that they were introduced from the Near East; however, he did not expand the discussion on how the domesticates or any other Neolithic traits were introduced. He commented that the Starčevo culture appears in the Balkans with all of the Neolithic traits and that the first stages in its development took place elsewhere (Glišić 1968, 22).

In his book *Praistorija na tlu SR Srbije* (*Prehistory on the Territory of the Republic of Serbia*), Milutin Garašanin very briefly mentioned the origins of the Neolithic and the Neolithisation process (Garašanin 1973, 54 ff). He stated that agriculture and animal domestication undeniably originate in the Near East and Anatolia and that, from there, they spread to the West and Northwest. The author further said that it was impossible to examine the mechanisms of this spread in depth. He assumed that after

a period of exploitation, the first agriculturalist communities moved from their original territory and settled in the area in search of fresh fertile soil. Upon arrival, they came in contact with local communities that were at a "lower level of socio-economic development" and which adopted these new economic forms and spread them further. He considered local adoption and the long duration of the migratory process itself to be the reason behind the emergence of new cultural complexes and separate cultural groups (Garašanin 1973, 54–55). However, he did go into detail about the process of adopting Neolithic traits or the adjustments they underwent.

It should also be mentioned that Draga and Milutin Garašanin excavated the site of Nosa – Biserna Obala near Subotica in northern Serbia, where they noted certain "Mesolithic traditions," i.e. "tools displaying the tradition of the Mesolithic microliths," as well as "dry clay" (interpreted at first as evidence of "pre-ceramic" items, but later as a purely functional trait, i.e., as some kind of isolation layer on the walls of storage pits) (Garašanin 1959; 1960). Unfortunately, the results of these excavations have never been published, except for a very short report (the same report was published in two journals – Garašanin 1959; 1960), and these Mesolithic traditions were not elaborated upon further.

Other studies of the Neolithisation process and the socio-economic organisation of Early Neolithic communities throughout most of the 20th century were scarce and usually focused on (and somewhat limited to) particular regions and sites; in other words, these interpretations were often derived directly from research of individual sites or relatively small areas, rather than including a more general view.

Research activities in the region of Vojvodina

As mentioned earlier, the excavations at the site of Starčevo-Grad marked the beginning of research on the Early Neolithic in Serbia. M. Grbić, who excavated the site first on his own and later as part of the Yugoslav-American team, never published the results of these excavations in detail (except for a small report – Grbić 1930). His main focus was on Starčevo culture's chronological position and its relationship with the Vinča culture. He immediately recognised Starčevo as a Neolithic site (see the overview and comments in Aranđelović-Garašanin 1954, 8), adjusting his interpretation as new data became available, and finally establishing the Starčevo culture as the predecessor of Vinča and as Early Neolithic.

His article *Starčevo kao izraz najstarije neolitske ekonomike na Balkanu* (*Starčevo as the Earliest Neolithic Economy in the Balkans*), published in 1959, reconsiders the chronological position of Starčevo, pushing it

back to the 5th millennium BC,[5] and also comments on the Starčevo culture's origins. Namely, looking at evidence found at the sites of Starčevo, Biserna Obala, and other Mesolithic and Early Neolithic sites in the wider region, he argued for the possible autochthonous origins of the Neolithic in these areas. This hypothesis was based on the findings of Mesolithic-type tools, "dried clay," and the presence of millet at Biserna Obala, as well as the absence of a stratigraphic hiatus between the Mesolithic and Neolithic layers at the site of Crvena Stijena in Montenegro (Grbić 1959, 15). He concluded that: "Concerning the hiatus between the Mesolithic and the Starčevo Neolithic, in the central and western Balkans future archaeological research may take as a starting point that it never existed and that the Starčevo Neolithic developed directly genetically and without any break from the Mesolithic cultures." (Grbić 1959, 15). He further noted that the evidence is rather scarce at present and that future research must incorporate interdisciplinary approaches by biologists, geologists, climatologists, etc., as well as radiocarbon dating (a novel method at the time) (Grbić 1959, 16).

Research activities in the Iron Gates region

The largest rescue excavation campaign in the history of Serbian prehistoric archaeology is the "Đerdap I" project, carried out in the 1960s and 1970s in the Iron Gates (Đerdap) in eastern Serbia. This region is a part of the Danube River course, as well as the state border between Yugoslavia (today Serbia) and Romania. This location site was chosen for the construction of a hydropower plant due to its geo-morphological traits. The construction of the dam, necessary for the hydropower plant, endangered many archaeological sites and prompted large-scale rescue excavations (Mrđić et al. 2017 and references therein). Dragoslav Srejović, a professor at the University of Belgrade, began excavations at one of the sites in the area called Lepenski Vir. The material collected from the surface indicated that this was a Starčevo culture settlement, but as excavations progressed, layers with traces from previously unknown Mesolithic communities were discovered, subsequently labelled as the Lepenski Vir culture. The Lepenski Vir culture yielded interesting and unique finds, quickly attracting international attention, as well as sparking long-lasting discussions.

D. Srejović soon published the results in a book entitled *Lepenski Vir. Nova praistorijska kultura u Podunavlju* (*Lepenski Vir. A New Archaeological Culture in the Danube Valley*) in 1969, which also included

5 Only one C-14 date for the Neolithic in Serbia was available at the time.

his interpretation of Early Neolithic communities. In the final chapter of the book, *Naslednici* (*Successors*) (Srejović 1969, 161–181), he wrote that the end of the Lepenski Vir culture is "as enigmatic as its beginning," and that the inhabitants that occupied the site during the Lepenski Vir IIIa phase knew nothing about their predecessors. They introduced dramatic changes to the structures they built, such as pits and semi-subterranean dwellings instead of trapezoidal houses, brought in new material culture, and also differed in their physical appearance, as shown by the evidence from the burials. However, D. Srejović offered a theory on the possible local development of the Neolithic within the Mesolithic Lepenski Vir culture. He considered the sedentary lifestyle of Lepenski Vir communities and the presence of dogs (presumed to be domesticated locally) as a possible "basis for the local 'Neolithic revolution'" (Srejović 1969, 180). However, he admitted that there was no evidence for domesticated plants.

Srejović also used archaeological data from the Iron Gates to suggest a new relative-chronological scheme of the Starčevo culture and introduce the Protostarčevo phase.

In his later publication, chapter *Protoneolit – Kultura Lepenskog Vira* (*Protoneolithic – the Culture of Lepenski Vir*), Srejović wrote that the first successes regarding the cultivation of plants and domestication of animals were achieved among the settlements of fishers and hunters in the Đerdap region. However, as these two main traits of the "Neolithic revolution" had not changed these communities' traditional way of life for a longer period, he defined this period as Protoneolithic (Srejović 1979, 33). He stated that the idea of the "Fertile Crescent" as the only territory with natural predispositions for the domestication of plants and animals stemmed from the 19th-century idea of the Near East as the "cradle of civilization." He argued that there was not enough evidence that the Near East was the only conceivable center of domestication and the Neolithic and that the southern Danube valley should not be excluded from studies of the "Neolithic revolution" (Srejović 1979, 73–74).

D. Srejović continued to advocate the local development of Neolithic features in *The Neolithic of Serbia* (1998), a volume he edited. He labelled the Lepenski Vir culture as pre-Neolithic and "a bridge in the chronological gap between the end of the Palaeolithic and the beginning of the Neolithic." He also stated: "This discovery finally discredited the deeply rooted prejudice which provided the basis for the theory of a migrational origin of Neolithic cultures in the Danubian valley, i.e. the theory that the central Danubian region was virtually uninhabited in the early Holocene period" (Srejović 1988, 9).

Research activities in the central Pomoravlje region

The region of Pomoravlje in central Serbia, surrounding the Velika Morava river valley and its tributaries, was among the better-researched areas that yielded a relatively large amount of data on Neolithic community inhabitations. Research activities included field surveys, small-scale and large-scale excavations, and research at sites such as Divostin (Srejović and McPherron ed. 1988; see Srejović ed. 1988 for references on individual sites).

Milenko Bogdanović, curator at the National Museum of Kragujevac, excavated several sites in the area with Starčevo culture layers. He participated in the excavations of Divostin, carried out collaboratively by Yugoslav and American teams, with D. Srejović as project director from the Yugoslav side (Srejović, McPherron eds. 1988). M. Bogdanović followed the ideas of D. Srejović regarding possible autochthonous development of the Neolithic in the Balkans, with his main arguments being differences in animal species (predominance of *Bos taurus* in the Balkan region) and differences in monochrome and painted pottery (Bogdanović 1998).

Savo Vetnić, the curator at the Regional Museum of Jagodina, conducted field surveys and excavations, mainly small-scale, at several Neolithic sites in the region. Based on these research projects, he offered a somewhat different hypothesis on the origins of the Starčevo culture in the Pomoravlje region (Vetnić 1998). He was critical of the idea that Starčevo communities spread in a single wave and offered a theory of expansion in several stages. He identified four components or phases in the development of the Starčevo culture in the area: 1) local or autochthonous, originating from the Mesolithic basis; 2) colonising, originating from the Near Eastern-southern Balkan area, associated with the migrations within the Balkan-Anatolian complex; 3) migratory, linked with nomadic communities from the Danubian and south Pannonian areas; and 4) diffusionistic, with refugees who left their original territory after new distribution of natural resources and who also brought in some of the influences from Early Vinča culture communities (Vetnić 1998). Although he attempted to expand upon the debate on the origins of the Neolithic and include settlement patterns in the analysis, his data were rather limited, since they were based on field surveys and small-scale excavations, and also lacked C14 dates, zooarchaeological, archaeobotanical, and other analyses.

Early Neolithic and Neolithisation studies in the 21st century

The end of the 20th and early 21st centuries brought important changes in prehistoric archaeology. In particular, advances in other sciences, especially research of aDNA and changes in theoretical approaches deeply influenced and introduced new directions to studies of the Neolithic and Neolithisation processes.

Studies of archeogenomics have shown that a new population had indeed arrived in Europe (e.g., Bramanti et al. 2009; Mathieson et al. 2018). However, the discussion regarding the mechanisms of the spreading of Neolithic traits, the relationship between Mesolithic and Neolithic communities, and others, are still ongoing in European archaeology.

In the past few decades, revisions of the previously excavated sites and previously collected archaeological data were initiated in Serbian prehistoric archaeology, and we can also observe the focus shifting from individual sites to more general topics. More recent studies include the establishment of the relative and absolute chronological position of the Starčevo culture (Tasić 2009; Whittle et al. 2002) and thorough analyses of diverse aspects of the material culture (e.g., Antonović 2003; Šarić 2014; Vitezović 2011; Vuković 2011), including interdisciplinary research (e.g., Jovanović 2017; Porčić et al. 2016; Đuričić 2021). Evidence from the Iron Gates region was particularly the focus of revised research (e.g., Borić 2005; Borić, Dimitrijević, 2007; 2009; Perić, Nikolić 2016).

Technologies: Traditions, innovations, and technological choices

Although the definition of the Neolithic way of life and the “Neolithic package” often mentions the introduction of new technologies alongside drastic changes in subsistence patterns, technological changes were seldom the focus of research within Serbian prehistoric archaeology. New subsistence and habitation patterns brought in new tasks, activities, and needs for everyday life, and subsequently the need for new tools (for soil working, food preparation, etc.) and other items (for food storage or other items related to the sedentary way of life). Some technologies became more prominent, such as woodworking or the processing of animal hides and plant fibres for the production of food storage and consumption items (reflected in the archaeological record in lithic and bone technologies – e.g., Antonović 2003; Vitezović 2016a).

Ceramic technology was certainly the most prominent and most important new technology, given the number of ceramic findings and their significance for chrono-cultural attributions. As a result, pottery was analysed from multiple aspects, mostly typological, although recent studies also include use-wear (e.g., Vuković 2011). However, besides acknowledging the that this technology was introducted, the details of this introduction, ways of disseminating ceramic technology, and any form of local adjustments were seldom the focus of research within Serbian archaeology (although in the south-eastern European region, M. Budja discussed ceramic technology in the Balkans, including the central Balkan – Budja 2006).

Changes in lithic technologies were addressed by a small number of studies and only in recent times. It is believed that abrasive and ground stone technologies were introduced; as D. Antonović stated, "the Neolithic polished stone industry in Serbia appears as a fully developed operation, with clearly defined and formed types of tools; there is currently little evidence relating to its origin" (Dimić, Antonović 2021, 556). She considers the area of the Iron Gates to be an exception, stating that "specificity of populated area and immersion of different types of raw materials already in the Mesolithic resulted in sedentary communities and the creation of an indigenous, totally unique industry of ground stone" (Dimić, Antonović 2021, 556; see also Antonović 2003, 131, 142–143).

Analyses of the bone industry in other parts of south-eastern Europe already showed the presence of changes of Near Eastern origin, labelled as part of the "Neolithic package" (Sidéra 1998). Analyses of the Early Neolithic (Starčevo culture) bone industry demonstrated an interesting pattern of presence of both Mesolithic traditions, such as a greater ratio of antler tools or the presence of projectile points made from bones, but also some Near Eastern influences, such as elaborated bone spoons with bowls and elongated handles made from *Bos* metapodial bones, tools made from caprine tibiae, elaborated decorative items, etc. These Near Eastern influences, however, were not simply adopted but underwent adaptations regarding both technological aspects and changes in their symbolic value and importance (Vitezović 2016a; see also Vitezović 2016b for a detailed discussion on bone spoons).

Comparative analyses of chipped and ground stone lithic and bone industries from the Early Neolithic site of Velesnica, situated in the Iron Gates, revealed an interesting mixture of Mesolithic traditions and innovations associated with Neolithic changes (Antonović et al. 2019). Namely, in the chipped stone industry, all Mesolithic traits seem to have disappeared – geometrical microliths are completely substituted by ordinary fragmented blades, with or without a retouch, while the ground stone industry displays some specific local traits, including the presence of fishing

weights that may be linked to Mesolithic traditions. The bone industry shows both the presence of new Neolithic characteristics, such as elaborated spoons, and some Mesolithic traditions, such as antler chisels and the use of scraping by chipped stone tools as a finishing technique for certain items (instead of abrasion with stones, a technique introduced in the Early Neolithic) (Antonović et al. 2019).

Symbolic realm

The symbolism associated with the "Neolithic package" and the Neolithisation process was seldom discussed within prehistoric archaeology in Serbia, although evidence from the Balkan region was used in some wider-European studies (e.g., Hodder 1990) and was also the focus of several studies by Mihael Budja (e.g., Budja 2003; 2004). M. Budja (2004) challenged the view that the farmers who migrated to the region of southeastern Europe brought in new technologies, symbolic behaviour, and symbols. Instead, he pointed out that the elements of the Neolithic package are well embedded in hunter-gatherer social contexts, and that Neolithic symbolic structures in the Balkans do not mirror the paradigmatic ornamental and symbolic principles of Asia Minor (Budja 2003; 2004). Furthermore, Budja noted that "hunter-gatherer symbolic structures in the Balkans and Carpathians maintained long traditions" and rejects the idea of the "revolution of symbols" (Budja 2004, 76). He concluded that "the hunter-gatherer's symbolic structures and the process of transition to farming were not exclusive and competitive, but rather correlative in maintaining control and power within society and over the frameworks of external interactions and exchange networks" (Budja 2004, 76).

Some symbolic aspects of Early Neolithic communities in central Balkan were analysed by S. Stanković, whose doctoral thesis focused on sacral places and objects (*Sakralna mesta i predmeti u starijeneolitskim kulturama centralnobalkanskog područja* – Stanković 1992). More recently, Jasna Vuković analysed specific types of items, so-called bucrania – ceramic objects that seem to represent horns, interpreted as amulets (Vuković 2005).

Discussion and concluding remarks

The studies of the Neolithic and Neolithisation processes are still an ongoing debate in European archaeology, although some scholars now consider that several factors contributed to the emergence of the Neolithic economy and Neolithic societies (e.g., Bellwood 2004). Questions about how Neolithic innovations spread, the modes of their adoption and

adjustments, and the diverse aspects of social, cultural, and economic changes, are still being analysed from different perspectives and revised as new approaches are offered and new data is constantly generated (e.g., Grębska-Kulow, Zidarov 2021; Özdoğan 2016, to name a few of the most recent studies).

In Serbian prehistoric archaeology, studies of the Early Neolithic using contemporary scientific methods began almost a hundred years ago. Since then, numerous advances have been made; however, the Early Neolithic, in general, has been less explored than the Late Neolithic, and studies have rarely focused on the very process of Neolithisation and its traits. As N. Tasić noted, although there are numerous studies dealing with Neolithisation, only a few are focused on the Balkans (Tasić 2009, 23); however, he only briefly remarked on Neolithisation and focused on selected aspects of the Starčevo culture (Tasić 2009).

Some scholars, such as J. Glišić and M. Garašanin, simply adopted socio-evolutionary views on the reasons for the emergence of the Neolithic, as an inevitable step in the progress of humankind, most likely influenced by the works of F. Engels (Engels 1973). They also accepted the region of south-western Asia as the origin of the Neolithic. Scholars such as M. Grbić and D. Srejović observed certain Mesolithic traits within the Starčevo culture, but instead of analysing the possible relationships between Neolithic and Mesolithic communities and reciprocity in influences, they proposed theories on the possible local development of the Neolithic economy by Mesolithic population. However, both of these somewhat polarised views provided limited discussion of the relationships between the Mesolithic and Neolithic communities and the socio-cultural changes they underwent, the process of inventing or adopting the Neolithic traits, or the very nature of the "Neolithic package" and the mechanisms of its dissemination, adoption, and adapting. Furthermore, neither of these approaches engaged in a larger discussion on the reasons why the Neolithic economy and Neolithic societies emerged (whether to adopt a more environmentalist approach or to focus more on social factors); and autochthons-oriented studies did not provide any explanations as to why Neolithic traits developed. The majority of debates in recent years is focused on the Iron Gates region, with limited focus on other regions. Future research on Neolithisation processes and the Early Neolithic in general in the central Balkan area should include studies on relationships between Mesolithic and Early Neolithic communities, models of spreading the "Neolithic way of life," as well as its traits – how Neolithic innovations were adopted and whether they were locally adapted. These discussions still need to be incorporated into the wider debates concerning the Neolithic and Neolithisation in Europe in general.

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SELF-REFLEXIVE TURN TO ONTOLOGICAL DEBATES IN ARCHAEOLOGY*

Abstract: The paper provides a short overview of the archaeological approaches closely related to the so-called "ontological turn." It is argued that the alleged reorientation of archaeological theory from epistemology to ontology, broadly referred to as the "ontological turn" strikingly mirrors the political, technological, and environmental issues and context of the contemporary world, and for that reason, its relevance in archaeological research of the past must be deeply, self-reflexively reconsidered.

Keywords: ontological turn, post-humanism, new materialism, post-anthropocentrism, archaeological theory, self-reflexivity.

Introduction

Given the traditional definition of archaeology as the study of the human past using material remains and objects, archaeological finds have commonly been treated as (inanimate) expressions of human/cultural behavior, creativity, and perception, or "as extensions of (and consequently clues to) human thought pattern" (Kay and Haughton 2019, 15). The question of how to make this general theoretical statement operational and applicable in concrete case studies, or how to approach material remains to understand the human past, has been at the center of theoretical debates in archaeology for decades. Up to this moment, archaeological theory has mostly been occupied by the issue of archaeological epistemology.

Recently, however, some archaeologists have started advocating for the reorientation of archaeological theory from epistemology to ontology and have accordingly proposed new ontologically-oriented archaeologi-

* The paper was written as a result of the research project *Man and Society in the Time of Crisis*, Faculty of Philosophy - University of Belgrade.

cal approaches. In short, they argue that earlier epistemological discussions rest on flawed metaphysical/ontological premises and should thus be abandoned as irrelevant. Common distinctions (dichotomies) we make between *thought* and *matter* (and other related distinctions such as between human [subject] and non-human [object], mind and body, culture and nature, spiritual and material, animate and inanimate, etc.), through which we (meaning modern science) have conceptualized the world/reality, are declared problematic because they do not fully describe reality as it is (and especially because they affirm anthropocentric perspective from which we approach the world/reality) (Witmore 2007, 549; Harris and Cipolla 2017, 29). As an alternative, some archaeologists have proposed new ontologically-oriented approaches, aimed at overcoming modern/Cartesian dualism[1] by replacing it with "an alternative metaphysical orthodoxy" (Alberti 2016, 163), widely referred to as flat (or relational) ontology.

In what follows I will critically reflect on this theoretical reorientation, broadly referred to as the "ontological turn," to show how strikingly it mirrors the political, technological, and environmental issues and context of the contemporary world, and how, for that reason, its relevance in archaeological research of the past must be deeply, self-reflexively rethought.

Before that, a summary of the most important arguments for replacing the previous Cartesian dualistic (also called substantive) ontology with the new one(s) will be provided. As will be seen, these arguments, as articulated by archaeologists, are mostly based on metaphysical statements about reality on the one hand, while on the other, they refer to ethnographic data about non-Western cultures whose descriptions and understandings of reality, unlike the Cartesian conception, are non-dualistic. Thus, archaeology's theoretical reorientation from epistemology to ontology is two-fold inspired by metaphysics and anthropology (Alberti 2016).

Metaphysically-inspired "ontological turn"

The arguments for abandoning Cartesian dualism are commonly based on the metaphysical claim that the ontological distinction between thought and matter, which is the central assumption underlying the mod-

1 Cartesian dualism refers to France philosopher René Descartes' (lat. Renatus des Cartes, 1596-1650) ontological dualism composing of two main substances: *res cogitans* (thinking substance or mind) and *res extensa* (extended matter or nature), with the first (mind) being ontologically superior to extended matter (nature). His dualistic ontology provided a base for the discussion on the best method for understanding what is true, i.e. scientific epistemology.

ern scientific worldview and its epistemology, is a form of false dualism that does not reflect reality as it is (Ribeiro 2019; Fernández-Götz et al. 2021).[2] Accordingly, all other related ontological distinctions between human and non-human, mind and body, culture and nature, etc. are also problematic in the same way. This leads some archaeologists to suggest that humans, along with the rest of the world's non-human beings, things, and other entities, are not what we used to think they are, and should thus be re-conceptualized and redefined (e.g. Olsen 2012; Crellin and Harris 2021).

Thus, during the last few decades, a wide range of ideas offering an alternative to the old/modern conception of the human subject and his/her place within the world has been proposed under the umbrella term of post-humanistic perspective (post-humanism) (Fernández-Götz et al. 2021). Comparatively, a new materialistic perspective (neo-materialism) has been articulated to problematize the ontological status of materiality (Thomas 2015), although "the question of how to theorize inanimate materials is also central to post-humanist concerns" (Key and Haughton 2019, 12). The terms post-humanist and new materialist perspective are thus used almost interchangeably by archaeologists, and both imply that the distinction between people and things, underlying the whole conception of archaeological study, may not be valid anymore.

Relational ontology

Post-humanism encompasses a diverse range of intellectual perspectives, of which some are mutually pretty inconsistent and may even be contradictory (Ribeiro 2019, 29; Kay and Haughton 2019, 13), but can all be said to have a common tendency to re-conceptualize the human being and his/her place within the world (Fernández-Götz et al. 2021). By reducing Western/European intellectual traditions to an understanding of the human being as a transcendental and ahistorical category, those committed to the post-humanist perspective rather see the human as inseparable from a very specific space-time entanglement consisting of many other things or entities (environmental conditions, animals, plants, materials, objects, technology, etc.), of which the human is just a part. Post-humanists argue that "human beings are one of many components that make up the world and that they cannot be understood apart from the wider relational assemblages, and specific historical processes, of which they are part" (Crellin and Harris 2021, 5). Accordingly, humans are de-

2 For an extensive critique of the ways in which some archaeologists understand and use metaphysical assertions for their arguments see Ribeiro 2019.

rived from historically contingent interactions with other (non-human) things and entities, meaning that their ultimate condition is contextual and shifting in nature; in other words, non-transcendental. The same is true of inanimate things (as well as animals, plants, and other non human beings) (Thomas 2015). They are also entangled in a network of all other things, among them humans, so they do not exist and thus cannot be understood without the relational matrix of historically contingent webs (Hodder 2012; 2016). This general theoretical position is most often referred to as a relational (or flat) ontology.

Largely inspired by scholars of diverse academic backgrounds such as Bruno Latour (1993, 2005), Karen Barad (2007), Manuel DeLanda (2006), Jane Bennett (2010), Levi Bryant (2011), Tim Ingold (2006; 2012), Dona Haraway (2004 [1985]; 2007), most notably Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), and many others, this vein of archaeology rejects Cartesian ontological dualism in favor of new models of relational or flat ontology, which depict a world where all entities (humans and non-humans) are mutually entangled in complex relational webs, such that none of them can be regarded as stable or bounded substances but rather as decentered phenomena constituted within an immanent state of flux and ongoing interactions (Kay and Haughton 2019, 7; Harrison-Buck and Hendon 2018, 8).

Given the relational matrix within which all phenomena, including both humans and non-humans, are constituted, the term flat ontology is used to denote that

> "all entities are on the equal ontological footing and that no entity, whether artificial or natural, symbolic or physical, possesses greater ontological dignity than other objects. While indeed some objects might influence the collectives to which they belong to a greater extent than others, it doesn't follow from this that these objects are more real than others" (Levi Bryant 2010, 246).

In short, while the modern/Cartesian paradigm treated the human subject as ontologically privileged and asymmetrically positioned in relation to all other entities (other beings/things), the post-humanist/neo-materialistic perspective requires that all entities are treated as ontologically equal/symmetrical.

Agency

For archaeologists, central to the argument that humans should not be treated as ontologically privileged in relation to other entities and beings is the recognition of the affective power of material things and, ac-

cordingly, non-human agency. In its most common version, the concept of non-human (or object-oriented) agency refers to the power of things and all other non-humans to influence and shape change. Assuming a new-materialistic perspective, directly inspired by Deleuze's concept of "affective matter," as well as other similar concepts such as "vital materiality" (Bennet 2010) and "vibrant matter" (DeLanda 2006), some archaeologists started to recognize

> "the contribution that matter makes to its own becoming, how the properties and capacities of materials like clay are critical to the making of objects like pots, and how the capacities of non-humans like rivers come to shape the landscape and their interaction with humans and animals" (Crellin and Harris 2021, 2).

The attribution/recognition of non-human agency is not a novelty in archaeology or other related disciplines.[3] A few decades ago, material culture studies, which heavily relied on the concepts of "objectification" or "materialization" (Miller 1987), revealed and highlighted the active role of material objects in the constitution of individual and social identities as well as in maintaining almost all kinds of social relations (Tilley et. al. 2006). Based on this logic, "people make objects that then act back on the formation of the human subject" (Thomas 2015, 1289). For example, it can be shown how long-lasting artifact traditions (otherwise known as style) have conditioned people's lives in various ways, encouraging them to act in particular ways and "effectively placing obligations on them" (Gosden 2005: 208). Moreover, agency is not necessarily inherent in and directed by humans, as non-humans can also induce an event or change (Harrison-Buck and Hendon 2018, 5,14).

Some ontologically-oriented archaeologists, however, take this notion of agency a step further and radicalize it, claiming that things are independent, autonomous actors (Hodder 2012; Olsen 2012), or even that they have the ontological status of persona (Harrison-Buck and Hendon 2018, 6). Such radical interpretations of non-human agency within archaeology are predominantly inspired by Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology – a philosophical model that gives primacy to objects rather than relational networks within which objects (both human and non-human) evolve. Accordingly, "non-human objects have an essence and a reality of their own" and can mutually interact without being mediated by a human being (Harris and Cipolla 2017, 188).

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3 Recognition of non-human agency (also personhood) within anthropology can be traced back to the pioneering works of Irving A. Hallowell *Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View* (1960).

Archaeologists who recognize/attribute agency in/to objects and thus equalize the ontological status of humans and non-humans differ in their formulations of "flat ontology," ranging from those who believe that things and people are genuinely ontologically indistinct, and that "intentionality" and "reflexive consciousness" are thus potentially available to all beings and things (Harrison-Buck and Hendon 2018, 6), to those who suggest an alternative concept to differentiate "agency" – closely linked to (human) intentionality, from "affect" – something more like "an affective force, which emerges relationally through interaction" (Key and Haughton 2019, 19; Crellin and Harris 2021, 3).

Anthropologically-inspired "ontological turn"

Unlike the metaphysically-inspired ontological turn that aims to formulate the conceptual framework for articulating true ontology, the anthropologically-inspired reorientation (from epistemology) to ontology is rather motivated by some Western anthropologists' readiness to engage in radical self-reflexive critique, and thereby "destabilize" and "decolonize" Cartesian ontological dualism on which the discipline (and Western science in general) is founded.

In anthropology, the ontological turn may be regarded as an extension and further development of the postcolonial, self-reflexive critique of the discipline's involvement in the Western imperialist subjugation of indigenous cultures/Others (Fowles 2016; Simić 2020, 27–28). Starting from the argument that the Cartesian dichotomies of thought/matter, nature/culture, etc. have made "other people's claim about reality and their ontological commitments appear trivial and wrong," anthropologists (e.g. Viveiros de Castro [1998; 2014], Martin Holbraad [2012], Amiria Henare [2007], Sari Wastell) advocate for taking other people and their concepts "seriously" (Alberti 2016, 171). By this, they mean treating the concepts by which indigenous communities describe reality, particularly those that do not make sense to us (for example that stones can speak), as true and "constitutive of reality, and therefore of nature, itself" (Graeber 2015, 20). In other words, ethnographic descriptions of non-Western societies whose conceptions of reality are not necessarily dualistic (e.g. Viveiros de Castro's Amerindian perspectivism), if taken seriously enough, have the potential to "destabilize" and "decolonize" our own (Western/Cartesian) ontological assumptions. Such a position obviously advocates for political justice and the rights of indigenous groups. At the same time, this "recursive" method, as Martin Holbraad calls it (2012, 46–47), is supposed to allow Western ontological dualism to be transformed in relation to indigenous one(s).

Another thing distinguishing the anthropological turn to ontology is the specific understanding of the term ontology itself (Alberti et al. 2011; Graeber 2015; Ribeiro 2019, 26). Unlike the metaphysically-inspired ontological turn that explicitly seeks a meta-ontology (which provides a more accurate understanding of reality), anthropology adopts a position where multiple different ontologies, and thus multiple different worlds/realities, exist (e.g. Henare et al. 2007, 6; see Tola and Santos 2020; Crellin and Harris 2021, 3). Accordingly, there is no one world/reality and different interpretations of it; rather, multi-reality (different ontologies) is possible. However, as others have already noticed, this position may easily slip into the old-fashioned concept of a culture whose meaning is, for this occasion, extended to include, alongside people, a whole variety of non-humans as well (Holbraad in Alberti et al. 2011, 902). Consequently, others may include not merely colonized people (or past people), as was commonly thought within postcolonial critique until recently, but also material things (animals, plants, environment, etc.) may be considered colonized Others as well, as some archaeologists have argued (e.g. Olsen 2003; see Harris and Cipolla 2017, 172; Fowles 2016).

Inspired by the radical self-reflexive critique within anthropology, archaeologists also started to consider "what we represent in our archaeological interpretations (i.e. a vision of the past) and how we can improve these through the elimination of Western assumptions" (Harris and Cipolla 2017, 173). Several solutions have been proposed, as we will see below.

Ontologically-oriented archaeologies

Following the commitment to the above-mentioned metaphysical arguments for relational/flat ontology and ethnographic descriptions of non-Western societies whose conceptions of reality are not necessarily dualistic, several so-called post-humanistic/neo-materialistic approaches have emerged within archaeology: symmetrical archaeology, post-anthropocentric archaeology, archeology of ontological alterity, and other related post-humanistic/neo-materialistic approaches.

Inspired by the above-mentioned scholars, most notably Bruno Latour (1993, 2005) and Karen Barad (2007), who regard all phenomena as relational, with no a priori distinction to be made between socio/cultural and natural/biological relation symmetrical archaeology assumes that material things "should not be regarded as ontologically distinct (from humans), as detached and separated entities, a priori" (Witmore 2007, 546).[4] This general theoretical position, shared by all other ontologically-orient-

4 The same premise of "human-thing entanglement" is elaborated by Ian Hodder in his proposal for an integrated archaeological theory (Hodder 2011; 2016)

ed approaches, has led proponents of the "principle of symmetry" (Bjørnar Olsen, Christopher Witmore, Michael Shanks, and Timothy Webmoor) to demand that archaeology be fundamentally re-conceptualized (Olsen et. al. 2012). Unlike the common, traditional conception of archaeology as the discipline that studies the human past using material remains, thus placing human beings at the center of universal history, symmetrical archaeology explores relational networks from which both human and non-human entities evolve. Accordingly, humanity is no longer the driving force of history, since material things, as well as other non-human entities (so-called *actants*), have the agency to induce change and make history.

Within the so-called *second wave of symmetrical archaeology*, some archaeologists expanded the argument for symmetrical archaeology even further in an attempt to demonstrate why material things must be taken more seriously by archaeologists (Olsen 2012, 20). In doing so, they adopted Graham Harman's philosophical speculation on object-oriented ontology (OOO)[5] as an argument for archaeological remains to be studied in their own right and not just as facets of human culture (Olsen 2012; Olsen and Witmore 2015; Harrison-Buck and Hendon 2018, 14). Accordingly, they reject treating things as inanimate, passive matter, commonly explained in terms of people who make, perceive, and consume things (Olsen 2012, 24), and instead advocate for paying close attention to things themselves, particularly those of their elements/aspects that exist beyond the world of humans (e.g. Olsen and Witmore 2015; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014).

This upgraded version of symmetrical archaeology is also closely associated with the anthropological self-reflexive critique, which aims to "decolonize" Western/Cartesian dualism by opening it up to thinking through ontological concepts of others, humans as well as non-humans. With that goal in mind, Bjørnar Olsen, the most prominent figure in this version of symmetrical archaeology, claims that

> "Archaeologists should unite in a defense of things, a defense of those subaltern members of the collective that have been silenced and 'othered' by the imperialist social and humanist discourses" (2003, 100).

In other words, archaeologists are asked to perceive material things as colonized Others, and thus stop further "making up stories that subjugate 'things' to their relationships with people," and instead engage with the

5 As mentioned above, Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology (OOO) is a philosophical model that gives primacy to objects rather than the relational networks within which objects evolve. Object-oriented ontology demonstrate how objects always exceed their relations and withdraw in part from each other and from human beings.

"alterity of things" (i.e. their resistance to our intellectual schemes) more seriously (Thomas 2015, 1291).

Another ontologically-oriented approach – post-anthropocentric archaeology – differs from symmetrical archaeology in that it does not have an exclusive interest in things themselves, but rather aims to contribute to the "post-anthropocentric redefinition of the human being and its place within the world" (e.g. Crellin and Harris 2021: 1, 3). Rather than denying the importance of humans, post-anthropocentric archaeology, which Crellin and Harris advocate for, starts from radically different meta-ontological assumptions about the human species, which, as the authors believe, "provide a more accurate understanding of the historical becoming of ourselves and our worlds" (2021, 3). Specifically, they adopt Deleuze's model of flat ontology as both the meta-ontological assumption (providing a more accurate understanding of the "becoming of" humanity) and the main argument for why archaeology must displace humanity from the center of archaeological study and its interpretation and establish post-anthropocentric archaeology.

According to its proponents, post-anthropocentric archaeology is "fundamentally" devoted "to social justice in the present, to political transformation and to a specific historically located understanding of the past" (Crellin and Harris 2021, 3). It is intended to be "a form of embedded and situated critique of Western-Cartesian thinking," closely following Rosi Braidiotti's and Dona Haraway's post-humanistic and feministic critique of the Cartesian perspective on humanism, which they believe "always privileges specific forms of humanity, and arranges human beings into a hierarchy with the white, able-bodied, Euro-American, heterosexual man firmly at the top" (Crellin and Harris 2021, 2–3).

Finally, a branch of ontologically-oriented archaeology that, for the purpose of this paper, is labeled *archaeology of radical (ontological) alterity* is also constituted as a kind of critique of Western/Cartesian dualism (and all other related concepts, such as anthropocentrism, representation, etc.). Analogous to anthropology, it attempts to think through ontological concepts and perspectives of Others (humans and non-humans) in order to diversify Western worldviews (Harris and Cipolla 2017, 180). In other words, it is conceived as a critical ontological approach with the ambition to theorize and practice archaeology based on indigenous concepts and theories, thereby allowing for radical ontological difference (alterity) to emerge (Alberti 2016, 172–174; Harrison-Buck and Hendon. 2018, 19).

For example, following Karen Barad's post-humanistic position and Viveiros de Castro's (1998) theory of radical alterity (Amerindian perspectivism), Yvonne Marshall and Ben Alberti (2014) carried out an analysis

of La Candelaria body-pots[6] to provide ontological alterity within which polymorphic pots are not representations of or symbols for either human or animal bodies, but rather actual bodies/single entities. By doing so, they aimed "to free potential alterity from the over-determination of representational thought" that was characteristic of Cartesian ontology, and thus "contribute to the anti-modernizing projects that defend a plurality of modes of being" (Alberti 2016, 172, 175).

Self-reflexive turn to ontological debates in archaeology

As we have seen, the argument for re-orienting archaeological theory from epistemology to ontology (the ontological turn) comes from a variety of intellectual and academic backgrounds. Some of the key references and direct intellectual inspirations come from post-Kantian philosophers willing to depart from what they consider a strictly epistemic path taken by philosophy after Kant, and thereby revitalize the relevance of ontological questions within philosophy once more (Graeber 2015; Ribeiro 2019). On the other hand, archaeological reorientation to ontology is also inspired by radical self-reflexive critique articulated within anthropology, which aims to "decolonize" anthropological/Western academic discourse by opening it up to thinking through ontological concepts of others, both humans and non-humans (Harrison-Buck and Hendon 2018, 5).

It is worth noting, however, that the ontological turn and the related post-humanist and new-materialist perspectives reflect a wider, not merely academic, context within which they are articulated. In terms of posthumanism, the wider context to which I refer may also be perceived as a kind of historically contingent entanglement or network within which both human (e.g. social, political) and non-human conditions/factors (e.g. technology, the environment) interact and affect each other.

For example, several scholars have already noted a striking concurrence of the post-humanistic perspective and the rapid growth of technology (notably of artificial intelligence [AI] and biotechnology) which are "in the course of diluting the boundaries between humans and nonhumans in a way that we can still not fully comprehend" (Díaz de Liaño and Fernández-Götz 2020, 546). Many post-humanistic arguments revolve around theoretical reflections of cybernetic development and/or the augmentation of the human body (often referred to as "transhuman-

6 Otherwise known as polymorphic (both human and animal shape) pottery, from northwest Argentina, 1st millennium A.D.

ism"). In this regard, Donna Haraway's use of the concept of "cyborg," which blurs human/machine boundaries in order to reject the rigid culture/nature distinction and displace the very idea of the human subject, is symptomatic. Her work *A Cyborg Manifesto* (2004 [1985]) initiated an ever-expanding range of debates centered on the physical qualities of being, paving the way for developing the argument that intelligence, and indeed consciousness, may not be exclusively human qualities, and that there is no strict demarcation between bodily experience and computer-based simulation (e.g. Kubes and Reinhardt 2022; see Key and Haughton 2019, 8).

Another important aspect of the current context within which the ontological turn has emerged is the rise in environmental challenges. Since the term *Anthropocene* was coined in 2000 to denote the most recent geological epoch in which humanity's impact on the environment has resulted in an ecological crisis of global proportions (e.g. Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Crutzen 2006), scholars have started to take humans' entanglement with other beings, things, and environments more seriously in order to find solutions to the ongoing environmental crisis. In this context, the anthropocentric exceptionalism inherent in Cartesian ontology has been identified as a major threat to the environment's well-being and its future sustainability (e.g. Ferrando 2016; Benson 2019). Accordingly, the post-humanistic (post-anthropocentric) perspective is becoming increasingly important as the necessary ethical response to the long-term consequences of Cartesian anthropocentrism (Selsvold and Webb 2020, 109; Crellin and Harris 2021)

Finally, the broad intellectual background of the ontological turn in archaeology is predominately associated with the Western (particularly Anglo-American, Scandinavian, and French) academy[7], reflecting the social and political issues of this part of the world. A closer look at what each of the purposed archaeological approaches has set out to achieve, reveals that they mostly aim to be politically engaged critiques of the Western/Cartesian intellectual tradition. They are commonly promoted as a "partner in the anti-modernizing projects that defend a plurality of modes of being" (Alberti 2016, 175). Comparatively, they provide an opportunity for the discipline to "challenge," "diversify," and "step out of" a Western mindset by embracing the alterity of past human and non-human perspectives (Harris and Cipolla 2017, 180; Kay and Haughton 2019, 19). It

7 A discussion on Hodder's theory of entanglement (held in Berlin 2013), in which the commentators (Susan Pollock, Richard Bernbeck, Caroline Jauss, Johannes Greger, Constance von Rüden, and Stefan Schreiber) referred to different disciplinary traditions in continental/central Europe and Anglo-American academy is particularly instructive here (see Hodder 2016, 130, 137)

is frequently argued that these critiques are the most appropriate or even the only possible political tool for engaging with contemporary Western society's specific political and social issues .[8] This is most obvious in the ambition of post-anthropocentric archaeology to contribute to the transformation of "patriarchal, racist, homophobic, and anti-migrant structures in the present" (Crellin and Harris 2021: 1,3). In this version, the ontological turn seems perfectly in line with the demands of *cancel culture* – a political movement that has risen from the very specific colonial history and experience of the Western academy and wider Western society (which do not necessarily correspond with all other societal experiences, especially not with those from the past).

Concluding remark

If the preceding attempt to contextualize the ongoing paradigm shift (the reorientation of archaeological theory from epistemology to ontology) within the wider intellectual, social-political, environmental, and technological backdrops of the present clarifies the degree to which it mirrors various present-day issues, I would like to suggest that the relevance of the proposed ontological approaches in archaeology needs to be deeply self-reflexively rethought. By this, I refer to the adoption of an epistemic perspective that makes archaeologists aware of the fact that they inevitably project their relationship with the present-day context and the related social/ideological values onto the object of their research i.e. the human past. Given this inevitable condition of knowledge production, as evidenced by numerous case studies from the history of the archaeological discipline, it is reasonable for contemporary archaeologists to take this condition more seriously and critically rethink attempts to establish ontologically-oriented archaeology. Admittedly, this only makes sense if the focus of archaeological research is the human past, given that some ontologically-oriented archaeologists claim that the past does not even exist. As such, it must also be re-conceptualized, alongside humans and things. However, any further discussion on such a radical statement made by some contemporary archaeologists goes beyond the scope of this paper.

8 Although there is nothing unusual about an academy's desire to be politically engaged in order to find solutions to ongoing global or local issues, it is questionable, as many other scholars have already noticed, whether and to what extent the suggested ontological approaches "represent an intellectual and ethical perspective from which we can better deal with the political and environmental issues facing the world" (Fernandez-Gotz 2021, 455; see Babić 2019; Díaz de Liaño and Fernández-Götz 2021, Van Dyke 2021; for anthropology see Bessire and Bond. 2014. Graeber 2015; Fowles 2016).

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A CHANGING PLACE OF GREEK BLACK- AND RED-FIGURE POTTERY IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHOD AND THEORY: FROM EVOLUTION OF STYLE TO ENTANGLEMENT AND OBJECTS' ONTOLOGY

Abstract: This chapter aims to present a short history of archaeological interest in style in ancient Greek black- and red-figure pottery – two distinct but related production techniques, which roughly date from the Archaic to the Early Hellenistic periods (*c.* 6th to early 3rd century BC) – and how this issue changed from initial culture-historical perspectives toward more recent epistemologies. A special focus is placed on consumption studies and some recent object-oriented approaches (e.g. I. Hodder's concept of entanglement), and how these theoretical perspectives could benefit from a plethora of information about the nature of Greek ceramics and its production obtained by J. Beazley and other culture-historical pottery specialists.

Keywords: black- and red-figure pottery, J. Beazley's connoisseurship method, consumption studies, entanglement, Greek *symposium*

Culture-historical archaeology and ancient Greek black- and red-figure pottery: An introduction

A central characteristic of culture-historical archaeology is the practice of defining past communities sharing the same material culture, beliefs, and customs in the ethnic or ethnocultural key. Additionally, due to the inherent focus on time and material culture changes, this perspective was also focused on evolution, which was seen as unilineal. Based on En-

lightenment ideas of progress and modern colonialism, unilineal evolution was the initial stage in the process of institutionalizing anthropology and similar disciplines. The ethnic view on culture, on the other hand, stemmed from Romantic nationalism and the belief in the "spirit of a people" (see Gosden 1999; Diaz-Andreu 2007).

As a result, the main goal of scholarly endeavours in archaeology throughout most of the 20th century was to determine all necessary stylistic characteristics of material culture in a clearly defined territory, which, in a nutshell, should represent the cultural traits of an ethnicity or a people. This was a flawed and ethnocentric perspective that projected modern views, social structures, and geo-political relations into the past (e.g. nation-state, colonialism, imperialism), as is now clear from more recent theoretical standpoints, not just in archaeology but in other disciplines as well (see below). Furthermore, it is practically impossible to define material culture strictly in ethnic terms since its meaning is dependent on previously established social structures, resulting in the same objects having different connotations when consumed in different cultures, or over time. Yet, even though the question of style in which an object was made has consequently become less important, the focus on the more general characteristics of material culture occupying a clearly defined territory, as well as the temporal changes, innovations, contemporary novelties appearing in different cultures, etc., has remained an important step in almost all archaeological endeavours that now usually use different theoretical apparatus.

This chapter aims to present a short history of the methodology and, to some extent, the theory developed by culture-historical archaeology and applied to understand the style of ancient Greek black- and red-figure pottery[1] – two distinct but related production techniques, which roughly date from the Archaic to the Early Hellenistic periods (c. 6th to early 3rd century BC) – and how numerous information obtained using this traditional approach can be used today having in mind the various epistemological changes in archaeology beyond culture-history. It represents a further elaboration of a previous work that focused on how this amalgam of old knowledge about Greek pottery, obtained using the very traditional approach to pottery studies, and recent theoretical perspectives in archae-

1 Black- and red-figure pottery is best known for the producers' custom to draw human figures in various everyday activities, involving numerous objects, animals, gods and real or mythical creatures, which was well accepted by Greek and non-Greek consumers. The difference between these two techniques is whether the figures are presented in positive or in negative, i.e. whether they are simply drawn on an untreated surface or the surface is black-glazed while the figures remain in the natural colour of the background (revers) (e.g. Cook 1997).

ology, anthropology, and other social sciences, can be applied today (see Вранић 2022).

The theoretical and methodological aspects behind studies of ancient Greek glazed ceramics in culture-historical archaeology probably represent the most concrete scholarly procedure that this traditional "school of thought" has provided (Вранић 2022: 77–90). There are numerous reasons for this argument that go beyond the scope of this chapter. However, one of the most notable is the fact that the technology behind the production of these ceramics from the 6th to the 3rd centuries BC (see Jackson, Green 2008), as it turned out, was culture-specific and indeed linked to the Greeks as a collective (particularly the city of Athens but also other centres). This is not to imply that other contemporary societies and social groups inhabiting the Mediterranean Basin and continental hinterlands during the first millennium BC could not use pottery, nor that they could not perceive it as an integral part of their world and culture, but only that the manufacture was very culture-specific. Yet, even though the production was to some extent universal for the Greek world, it also appeared to be very individualistic in terms of the persons decorating the wares. Furthermore, this enormous corpus of finds revealed some temporal differences that could help in determining chronology, which was and still is one of the most critical questions in archaeology. In short, the red and black-figured vases were very peculiar forms of material culture that indeed were well suited for the abovementioned traditional theoretical standpoint (but also for some more recent ones, see below) because, more than most other objects in human history, they could relatively easily provide answers to some basic archaeological questions – dating of a context, an object's place of origin, social contexts in which it was used – and provide some clues as to the interrelations of different communities.

From style to technique and back in culture-historical Greek pottery studies

At the beginning of the culture-historical focus on Greek black– and red-figure pottery, in the late 19th and early 20th century, there were no conceptual differences between style and technique or technology. First, the main goal was to distinguish which one (the red or the black) came earlier, and what other centres besides Athens produced similar wares (see Cook 1997). The idea was to organise the different "styles," which were understood as characteristics of an epoch (Archaic or Classical), into a spatial but also coherent temporal framework, which would provide a bet-

ter understanding of the nature of the black- and red-figure Greek glazed pottery (see Boardman 1974; 1975; 1989; 2001; cf. Shanks 1996). However, some of the first researchers following this methodology found that this was oversimplified and that the best terminology would be – the red– and black-figure decoration technique. The most prominent among them was Sir John Beazley (1885–1970), one of the pioneers in this research and certainly the best-known representative of the culture-historical approach to Greek ceramics; he came to this distinction very early in his career (Beazley 1918; 1922; 1963; 1971; 1986).

By technique, Beazley meant the representation of subjects appearing as red figures (i.e. in negative or reverse), in contrast to the previous black-figure decorations where the human and other images were made in positive (see note 1). Style, on the other hand, denoted more individual practices in depicting specific motifs and details within the respective technique, which could go as far as a single producer or a workshop. Greek black- and red-figure vases represented almost every possible activity in the life of Greek men and women that could be bulked together in a few dozen of genre scenes, from myths, gods, religious activities, and death, through war, but also athletes working out or competing, marriage rituals, going to school, playing games, cooking, manufacturing various objects (including pottery), weaving, gossiping, fetching water, doing laundry, drinking, singing, *symposium* scenes, etc. Like modern-day graphology, which examines the individual characteristics of handwriting, Beazley's methodology (i.e. his connoisseurship method, borrowed from art history) involved comparing the smallest details relating to these scenes and represented subjects with widespread motifs and images repeated over and over again on other pots (e.g. eyes, ears, hands, certain parts of clothing, hairstyles, facial expressions, recognisable individuals, and supernatural beings). Since the speed of production was of great importance and the images were a consequence of the rushed moves of a skilled and well-practised hand, Beazley strongly believed that in most cases these preferences about how something was portrayed could be distinctive for a particular painter[2] (or at least the most prolific ones), or closely related groups of painters who worked together and learned from each other (e.g. Beazley 1922; see Arrington 2017; Вранић 2022: 82–83).

For Beazley, this change of focus to a completely personal level opened up an enormous amount of information about hundreds of painters who had developed distinctive individual styles of decoration. Additionally, Beazley (1918; 1963; 1971; 1986) not only organized the painters

2 It is widely believed that Greek potters and painters were male, but this could be a biased perspective (see Mitchel 2009: 23; Arrington 2017)

into precise chronological lists but sometimes even managed to place their various works in the temporal framework of their lives and careers – from early vases showing how they were initially successful (or not) in learning to make better and better pots to those indicating their inevitable decline due to age or some other reasons (e.g. vision loss and shaky hands) (see Вранић 2022: 83).

This methodology was ground-breaking compared with other culture-historical archaeologists active in the first half of the 20th century, who remained focused on style as a characteristic of an archaeological culture, most likely because they were dealing with less specific objects not suited for connoisseurship. Yet, Beazley's epistemology was not new (see Вранић 2022: 81–84). In addition to colonial interest in Greece as the "cradle of European civilisation" (for colonial aspects of classical archaeology of Greece, see Gosden 2004; Dietler 2005), he also followed well-established narratives about the importance of style changing over time – from its beginning, development, and zenith, to its inevitable decline, which was a European concept constructed since Romantic nationalism, with J. J. Winkelman as one of the most prominent pioneers (see Irwin 1972; Бабић, Михајловић 2016). The major difference was his focus on the evolution of styles of an individual artisan, and the consequent information concerning these individuals' positions within the development of the stylistic/technological features of an epoch (Вранић 2022: 83).

Beazley's elaborate analysis of many aspects of pottery production represented the most concrete methodological procedure that this traditional archaeological "school of thought" could provide. Unfortunately, after a slow decline of culture-historical archaeology in the second half of the 20th century, these pieces of information were more or less neglected, and have never been thoroughly re-examined and, if correct, used within a more up-to-date theoretical framework (cf. Arrington 2017). Additionally, due to the previously mentioned prominent reasons for the criticism of culture-historical epistemology (its ideas about the ethnic nature of all material culture differences, colonialism, imperialism, etc.), information related not only to the chronology of painters and their distinctive styles but also to their figurative representations of various everyday occurrences in Greek culture have become obsolete and unimportant – most likely due to the fact that traditional archaeologists were inclined to perceive these images in an art historian manner, extracting any social context from them (Whitley 1997). However, this is to an extent confusing. Post-processual archaeology is often focused on individual agents from the past, and it seems that if Beazley's information were aided with more emphasis on contexts, they would have a lot more to offer (Вранић 2022: 88–90).

Due to broader changes in social theory taking place over the last decade or more, which includes the revival of materialistic philosophy such as Actor-Network Theory (ANT), the ontological turn, Ian Hodder's concept of entanglement, and various other object- and non-human-oriented perspectives (see below), the question of the individual styles of Greek pottery producers will probably gain new prominence. This is especially the case if Beazley's lists of painters are indeed deeply informative about the various aspects of pottery production, including the precise chronological places of these individuals in the evolution of the black– and red-figure techniques; even more so if he was also right about the progress of their careers (cf. Sapirstein 2013; 2014). The reasons lie in the fact that these wares were widely used not only in ancient Greece, where they had certain culture-specific meanings, but also by non-Greek consumers in completely different social contexts.

Consumption studies, materialities, and entanglement in archaeology

Besides ANT and similar recent approaches, several earlier archaeological and anthropological theories could have made more use of the information about Greek glazed pottery. Consumption and material culture studies, for example, were among the most promising when they appeared in the eighties and nineties. In short, these post-structuralist and constructivist perspectives considered symbolic, discursive, and strategic aspects of the consumption of certain objects essential for the construction of diverse individual and group identities that were not static (e.g. Miller 1998; Buchli 2002; Hicks 2010). Unfortunately, aside from a few exemptions (e.g. Osborn 2007; Bundrick 2019), scholars interested in Greek pottery have rarely combined the plethora of Beazley's information about the painters with consumption studies.

Drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of action and the concept of habitus (see Bourdieu 2013), these perspectives focused on the dependence of human actors, social and identity groups, and entire cultures on objects, man-made structures, or even landscapes, which are necessary for socialisation (so-called habituation). Namely, every human actor learns about the social structures of the group in which he or she is brought up by acknowledging practices and behaviours that are acceptable or not, a process that is impossible without material culture, built environment, landscape, etc. (see Clarke 2003; Hicks, Beaudry 2010). However, societies are not static and the current nature of individual or group identity

resulting from habituation is merely an outcome of negotiations between various human actors, who always have some goals in mind and use material culture and other non-human elements to gain certain cultural, social, or symbolic capital in Bourdieu's sense. To achieve what they want, actors need not only be aware of preexisting and culture-specific social structures, practices, and local meanings ascribed to material culture, and to abide by them, but also often have to make certain changes. To gain capital, these actors often use old or new forms of material culture in ways that generate new and innovative practices, which can transform preexisting social structures and consequently ascribe new meanings to objects. Since previous meanings remain known to members of that society, these objects develop more complex biographies as a result (Dietler 2010: 209–210). Furthermore, by gaining value, these objects also become more active and important factors for future cultural changes – like social stratification and new identity constructions (Miller 2005: 2; Clarke 2003: 26–69). Such **materialities** – a term frequently used in these studies to explain the complex connections between people and objects – eventually become indispensable tools in human strategies and ambitions. In other words, by focusing our research on how people make, use, and experience things that surround them, archaeologists and anthropologists gain insights into the processes of social change that are to an extent based on the active role of things, which become a force behind constant human reflections on who they are and how they are involved in society (Harris, Cipolla 2017: 92). By following this methodology, a more complete picture of the complex interactions between people and objects that gain different meanings over time can be obtained (see Gosden, Marshall 1999; Dietler 2010; Вранић 2022: 18–20).

The biographical approach to objects as materialities, which is probably the best-known aspect of consumption studies (see Kopytoff 1986; Appadurai 1986; Dietler, Herbich 1998; Gosden, Marshall 1999; Gosden 2005; Tilley 2006), is a suitable starting point for a better understanding of the different roles of Greek pottery (see Вранић 2022). It can shed more light on how and why these pots were used by various ancient Greek individuals and social groups but also other communities and cultures who came in contact with these specific objects. By analysing stages in their biographies – starting from production in centres like Athens where small workshops competed in making the most interesting pots and scenes, through distribution within a centre of production or beyond, followed by consumption by ancient Greeks or non-Greek actors, to precise ways of its disposal within numerous archaeological contexts – we can understand how these specific forms of material culture became imbued with numer-

ous different meanings providing various consumers with countless social positions (Вранић 2022: 29–36).

All of these theoretical and methodological principles are based on the idea that things have agencies and that, consequently, they are active factors in any society. Yet, according to post-structuralist and constructivist perspectives, this agency derives only from some earlier human action and conceptualisation that have already invested these objects with more complex meanings. On the other hand, some current and somewhat more controversial theoretical trends give the objects and every other non-human actor not only agency but also ontology (e.g. Olsen 2010: 151–173). As a result, the natural world and material culture are active agents (or more often **actors**) that can shape a society due to their pre-existing physical nature and sheer existence, which is present and obvious, and not just through human intervention on symbolic and discursive levels. The most basic result of these concepts is a trend of avoiding anthropocentric views accompanied by a belief that any future research should also avoid all binary oppositions between humans and non-humans (objects, plants and animals, built environments, landscapes, viruses, etc.) (Вранић 2022: 24). In other words, some authors argue that understanding any culture in its entirety is impossible if we depend solely on people, their thoughts, beliefs, values, etc., and neglect a plethora of other actors that are inseparable from humans within a given culture (see Harris, Cipolla 2017: 129–151).

In today's archaeology, the most prominent scholarly endeavour of this kind is Ian Hodder's concept of entanglement (e.g. Hodder 2012; 2016; see Вранић 2022: 22–25). Elaborating upon some of Bruno Latour's ideas about symmetric anthropology or anthropology of association, as well as Actor-Network Theory (e.g. Latour 2005), Hodder develops a new theoretical path designed particularly for archaeologists and our inherent disciplinary focus on things, for which he believes was often neglected or even completely forgotten about due to the idealistic nature of post-structuralism and social constructivism. To achieve new goals in comprehending how humans and things get entangled, and how these interrelations define culture, the first step any archaeologist must take is to overcome the division between materialism and social constructivism (Hodder 2011: 181). The next should be a more profound understanding of what entanglement is all about, and this may appear to be a difficult task. Namely, Hodder defines this concept as "the dialectic of **dependence** (*sensu* reliance [on things], and being contingent [on the particular things relied upon]) and **dependency** (*sensu* some form of constraint)" (2012: 17–18; 89). To put it more clearly, human-thing relationships are networks of obligations emerging not only from human reliance on and investment in things but also from various consequences of this human inclination.

Namely, since humans and things are constantly changing (i.e. everything is temporal), how and when something is used becomes very important. Additionally, there is more to the agency of things than just human intervention on symbolic and discursive levels as the physical nature of things and their temporality (i.e. the process of breaking down and decay of organic materials) are present and take place even without human interferences. Consequently, we should take all of this into consideration when discussing culture, which is not only about humans. Entanglement stands for hierarchical inter-dependence between actors and consists of the dependence of humans on things (HT), things on other things (TT), things on humans (TH), and humans on humans (HH) (Hodder 2012: 17–18; 88; 2016: 13–25).

Hodder's entanglement is not the only symmetrical[3] and object-oriented concept to emerge recently in archaeology that focuses on the temporality of networks and the various previously overlooked roles of non-human actors (see e.g. Olsen 2003; 2006; 2010; Knappet, Malafouris 2008; Knappet 2011; 2017). Besides theoretical elaborations fitting the recent trends in social sciences (e.g. ANT, ontological turn), these new perspectives may also have somewhat more practical consequences – to establish a theoretical basis for better use of the enormous amounts of information about people, material culture, and past environments obtained by recent multidisciplinary research. Coming from DNA and stable isotopes analyses, some of the most prominent perspectives are about human migrations, procreation, diet, etc. (e.g. Borić, Price 2013; Allentoft et al. 2015; Haak et al. 2015; Kristiansen et al. 2017; Mathieson et al. 2018). Others are focused on the physical nature of objects and their origins, as well as the technology of production, distribution, and use (e.g. Mason et al. 2016; Pernicka et al. 2016; Powell et al. 2017; Berger et al. 2022; Numrich et al. 2023), or changes in landscapes and plant growth (e.g. Tang et al. 2010; Allaby et al. 2021), animals (e.g. Ethier et al. 2017; McHugo et al. 2019; Guimaraes et al. 2020), etc.

3 Hodder, however, does not consider his concept to be symmetrical but **asymmetrical** and focused on **hierarchical relations** between different human and non-human actors, which represents a fundamental difference compared to the other approaches. "*This 'more' is captured by the ideas of dependence and dependency – that rather than the flatness of many network analyses, there is asymmetry and hierarchy within the networks and flows. To put it another way, the chains, networks and flows are tangled up in each other. As the invisible filaments spread out from things, they get caught up in other filaments that connect other things and humans. So there is a fundamental difference between chains, networks, flows and entanglements. The former are often seen as flat and symmetrical. The focus on entanglement, however, sees the operational sequences and flows as caught up, tangled up in each other in asymmetrical ways*" (Hodder 2016: 145).

It seems that most of these recent multidisciplinary endeavours are undertaken without a theoretical background as elaborated as in the case of the above-mentioned concepts, and yet they have made a revolution in answering some basic archaeological questions (see Kristiansen 2014). To make things even worse for theoretical archaeology and its prominent role in our discipline, most of these answers seem to be in line with some very traditional culture-historical perspectives, or at least seem so superficially. For example, some of the interpretations about migrations, male warriors, and their numerous posterity, proto-Germanic dialects in the Bronze Age, etc., appear so traditional that many authors argue they would be met with blessing smiles not just from V.G. Childe (the most prominent British culture-historical archaeologist) but also G. Kossinna (the most prominent Nazi archaeologist) were they still alive, and because of that, we need to be extra considerate not to overlook the complexity of the past by over-relying on simple solutions to complex problems (Heyd 2017: 354–357). Instead, if we have the tools to comprehend the dynamics and temporality of networks entrapping humans and other non-human actors, maybe the results of these multidisciplinary endeavours can be even more informative and less likely to be criticised as simplistic answers to complex questions.

Materialities and entanglement in Greek *symposium*-related pots: A way forward

The most widely known aspect of Greek figured pottery is its use in *symposia* (see Вранић 2022: 96, 141–142), which represented culture-specific and strictly structured male evening parties taking place at a host's home, sometimes in a room (*andron*) specifically built for this purpose. In addition to communal drinking of wine, for which specific sets of figured pottery of different shapes (e.g. kraters, *oenochoae*, cups) and functions (mixing, fetching, drinking, etc.) were required, these gatherings also involved philosophical and political discussions, poetry, singing, playing various games, etc. Archaeological and historical literature about Greek *symposia* is extensive and covers a wide range of topics. There is the discursive aspect of communication and sharing ideas that were necessary for shaping the role of Greek aristocracy and free men in a polis as a collective social and political entity (Morris 2000: 182–185; Murray 2009: 520–522; Hobden 209). Some authors focus on how *symposia* influenced the design and architecture of private houses (Nevett 1999: 180–193; Lynch 2007: 248– 249). Furthermore, there is the issue of female and male slaves and entertainers and their identities (Goldman 2015).

Interestingly, the pots used for this occasion were almost always (at least in the case of ancient Athens, see Lynch 2011) decorated with *symposium*-related figured scenes that visually represented the above-mentioned activities. Greek pottery painters regularly produced images depicting wine being served from a *krater* or *lebes*, party participants in a semi-recumbent position on couches drinking wine from cups and other vessels of different sizes, in all stages of intoxication and sometimes playing *kottabos*, female and male entertainers dancing and playing, the consequences of an excessive amount of alcohol, the occasional sexual acts, *comasts* after leaving the party, etc. Due to the information obtained by culture-historical archaeology and its focus on style, many of these vessels are not only very precisely dated, but it is also possible to determine who their specific creator was (see above). Yet, in addition to painters and the beauty of their work that are a very common subject in literature, information about the contexts of these pots within an *andron* has been very scarce, aside from a few examinations (e.g. Lynch 2011).

One of the most prominent examples of using this information about painters and concrete figured scenes in a more promising way is the already mentioned work of R. Osborn, which is focused on recognising the active role of the figured scenes and vessel shapes in a *symposium*. This author views the issue through the theoretical framework of consumption studies and habitus, pointing out that figured ceramics represented agents who played a role in the construction of the identity of party participants the same way as discursive practices did (Osborn 2007). Namely, these recipients played a tangible role not only in the overall experience and atmosphere but also in the specific course of each party. The reason for this lies in the fact that the vessels and thus the representations depicted on their surfaces changed. By purchasing new ones, perhaps for each organised symposium (see Webster 1972), or more likely, not that often but still regularly (see Boardman 1979: 34), they would surprise the guests with the choice of iconography. That is why there are indications that the scenes illustrating the events of an imaginary *symposium* directly influenced the behaviour of ancient Greeks during the specific *symposium* in which they participated. The shapes (in terms of size and volume) and especially the visual representations that a certain guest received, actively influenced him by most often directly provoking a certain reaction. It seems that the roles assigned by the pot, which could be very pleasant, but also humorous, provocative, or even humiliating, compelled the guest to express himself most directly. Either in the form of acceptance (when he "played out" what the vessel assigned to him) or by adequately and appropriately rejecting the offered insinuation. In other words, the reactions of individuals to the challenge of a figural representation could directly affect

their image and future position in society, which unequivocally attests to the active role of this form of material culture in the construction of Greek identities (Osborn 2007; see Вранић 2022: 141–142).

Today, in studies of Greek ceramics, it is argued that many other well-structured activities in Greek societies were usually accompanied by vessels with representations of the situations in which they were used (weddings, funerals, weaving, etc.). In this sense, in addition to the *symposium*-related scenes, it seems that similar situations with pots provoking a response were far more common in the everyday life of the Greeks. If so, vessels were undeniably an active factor in the construction and maintenance of Greek social structures and practices. The question arises, however, as to who was responsible for their agency. In the case of a *symposium*, it can be the organiser who consciously created the atmosphere of the party he was hosting, whether tranquil or very heated. On the other hand, we must not forget the manufacturer who had the talent and economic logic to create an item that would sell well. It seems, however, that a consumer of such a vessel was indeed entrapped within a network consisting, in addition to himself, his equal companions, and unfree entertainers, of wine, pots and their decorations, a dedicated room, sounds, smells, atmosphere, and so on. Any change within this network could make a difference and determine his reactions, experiences, and, possibly, future position. In this sense, it may be said that the mere existence of inanimate actors can make a difference, even independently of people.

The Greek *symposium* is a very specific practice that fortunately we know a lot about, and it is worth noting that culture-historical efforts focused on pottery styles were very helpful in obtaining some of this information. For this reason, when it comes to *symposium*-related black– and red-figure vases, it is much easier to draw conclusions based on concepts of consumption studies or Hodder's entanglement than in the case of other objects entangled with practices and customs from different cultures. However, because of the progress in multidisciplinary research, it seems possible that we will soon acquire the same or a similar amount of information about these other activities and categories of material culture. Subsequently, by examining the numerous and highly complicated networks in which each item was found, we might gain far greater knowledge about the society we are investigating. On the other hand, the question remains as to whether concepts such as entanglement are a really necessary step in these endeavours. In the case of archaeology, I believe, the answer is – yes.

Entanglement can potentially be criticised as another return to Marxism and other materialistic philosophies in Western academic circles that turn the focus to objects and things in a somewhat more up-to-date form.

For many, it may seem illogical that one thing can affect another, and some may even mock the whole idea. On the other hand, archaeology is the discipline of things. We do not have a time machine or anthropological tellers, and in that sense, these theories can be promising at least as a second best. This is especially the case if we consider the progress in the natural sciences and multidisciplinary analyses that reveal numerous information that was previously unknown to us. However, if by any chance allowed to observe or participate in a Greek *symposium*, I believe far more information would be gathered by just talking to people than by interpreting the ontology of things. This does not mean that things are not important and even indispensable, but only that we should not overemphasise their relevance compared to human ideas. In that sense, archaeology may be forced to take an ontological turn due to the nature of the discipline itself, whereas other scholars who are not focused on the past may have a better chance of finding a balance, demonstrating that human ideas are a more active and important factor.

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HEGEMONY AND "RELATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS" IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE*

Abstract: The paper continues the discussion about the characteristics, advantages, and limitations of the so-called *ontological/material turn* and *posthumanist* perspectives in archaeology. It specifically focuses on the application, possibilities of improvement, and usefulness of these theoretical approaches within Roman archaeology. After reviewing the current debate, the "pros and cons," it is proposed that materialities, as well as *relational associations* composed of various kinds of entities in general, cannot be divorced from ideational aspects that humans inevitably bring in. Therefore, it is suggested that the critical synthesis of material-ideological antagonism is required, because it is impossible to separate relational associations (aka. *assemblages*, *constellations*) from power distribution, as well as that their qualities, capacities, and agency are not neutral, but, on the contrary, hegemonic. Some examples from the Balkan-Pannonian part of the Roman Empire are provided in an attempt to clarify the reasoning.

Keywords: ontological/material turn; posthumanism; Roman Empire; hegemony; Kremna fort; Bassianae; Tekija hoard

Introduction: From colonial to decolonial perspectives in Roman archaeology

Since the beginning, origins have been one of the major topics of archaeological research, and Roman archaeology is no exception in this regard. However, the specificity of Roman provincial archaeology is a search for the nature of culture(s) in areas integrated into the Roman Empire that had previously operated in proto- or pre-historic modes (as de-

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fined within the disciplines of archaeology and history). In other words, the main focus has been to explain how provincial life came to be, how much of its character originated under Roman influences, and what share of pre-Roman culture and social features remained after the conquest and transformative effects of Roman rule. For this purpose, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the concept of Romanization was formulated and quickly accepted as an objective and useful interpretative framework within Roman studies (which included historiography, classical philology, and archaeology). This explanatory mechanism was constructed from prevalent worldviews of the time that included colonial and imperial ideologies, socio-cultural evolution, Eurocentrism, ethnocultural determinism, androcentrism, and other less pronounced prejudices (Webster and Cooper eds. 1996; Hingley 2000). In a nutshell, the "theory" of Romanization argues that politically, economically, and culturally "less developed" prehistoric people benefited from Roman rule since the well-organized and progressive Mediterranean state of classical provenance introduced civilization and improved living conditions among the "barbarian tribes." This was also the discourse of origin: the leading European circles viewed their own societies and countries as ideological and cultural successors of the Roman Empire and its governance as a civilizing mission that culturally fertilized European ground and enabled its later (modern) progress. Since the process was imagined as a rigid binary opposition, academic interpretations overtly or covertly favored the Roman side as the forbearer of European civilization, equating the "essence" of ancient "barbarians" and that of "primitives" in modern colonies. Consequently, by focusing on epigraphic evidence and the distribution of material culture that allegedly mirrored "pure Roman" templates, the Romanization discourse attempted to show how deeply the transformative influences had penetrated native societies and the degree to which they transformed into Romans (see Hingley 2014).

Despite a few dissonant voices, the Romanization theory long remained the dominant paradigm of Roman provincial studies and swiftly spread throughout academic traditions in Europe and beyond. However, during the 1990s and early 2000s, critical views began to arise, chiefly from British and Dutch scholarship. Notably, the change in perspective started with the work of Martin Millet and his questioning of the role of local elites in the process of constituting Roman rule in the provinces. He highlighted the top-down diffusion of cultural templates and opposed the traditional view of Roman culture expanding simply because it was superior to local prehistoric traditions (Millet 1990). Reconsiderations continued with an increased awareness of the double bind type of bias in Romanization arguments: it was founded on readings of texts produced by Roman elites

that interpreted the population of Others in their specific ways, to which modern, equally culturally conditioned worldviews were added to come to conclusions about the nature and impacts of Roman imperialism. This had the effect of facing mirrors, endlessly reflecting one other’s image and mutually feeding the bundle of biases that they had interwoven. The outcome was an extremely simplified academic construction of the Roman Empire. As a way to overcome value-laden simplifications, and to make it more elaborate and less prejudiced, the employment of theoretically advanced approaches was suggested (Blagg and Millet eds. 1990; Webster and Cooper eds. 1996; Mattingly ed. 1997; Woolf 1998; Hingley 2000; see also the volumes that came out of *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*). The expressed concern addressed the concept of Romanization in its intimate link with Eurocentric colonial discourse but also suggested that Roman imperialism created situations similar to the colonial contexts of the modern era. Thus, it was proposed that Roman archaeology should use frameworks developed in postcolonial and other critical theories to deconstruct its inherent ideological background but also to try to closely investigate the previously neglected subaltern side of Roman-native interaction (e.g. Webster 1996; Woolf 1997; Hingley 2000). From this point, the discussion unfolded in several directions, one being the research of the native part in “Roman-barbarian” interactions using the concepts of cultural creolization and hybridity (Webster 1997; 2001; 2003), as well as questioning the ethnic and cultural identity of provincial populations (Woolf 1998; Roymans 1995; 2004; Laurence and Berry eds. 2001; Derks and Roymans eds. 2009). The other related line of thought, inspired by the concept of world systems, introduced the idea of a globalized and globalizing Roman Empire (Hingley 2005). Indeed, starting in the early 2000s, the issue of connectivity brought about by the Roman Empire and imperialism started to gain increasing attention (Pitts 2008; Pitts and Versluys 2015).

What I want to convey with this simplified overview is that over the last thirty years, there has been a dynamic and vibrant development of theoretical perspectives within Roman archaeology, which is, of course, connected to the wider theoretical drifts in archaeology and humanities in general (Gardner 2013; Mihajlović 2020a). Although theoretically-oriented work in Roman archaeology is not as common as traditional approaches that are still strongly influenced by the Romanization perspective, especially in European continental academia, it is certainly much more common than before, and more importantly, it has opened the way for further elaboration and refinement of our analytical and interpretative apparatus. In this article, I discuss the so-called “ontological turn” in Roman theoretical archaeology, how the debate has moved from “human ideological” issues to “post-human and material” ones, and whether there is a chance for a dialectical synthesis of currently opposing views.

Roman archaeology and the "ontological turn"

The most recent attempts at theoretical innovation within Roman studies stem from the so-called "ontological turn," which has been promoted in archaeology over the last two decades. The term is vague and covers differing standpoints dealing with the boundaries of humanity and its relations with various other entities, such as the natural environment and space, different living beings, inanimate things, etc. This reasoning questions the essentialist presumption that humans are at the center of the universe and that everything else is, if not completely subordinated, then at least less important and inferior to them in ontological terms. Although such views already existed and were discussed in philosophy, anthropology, and sociology, what piqued the interest of archaeologists was the question of the role of materialities within the realm of the social and whether we have any grounds to treat things of any kind as merely passive utilities at humankind's disposal. Because of the predominant archaeological focus on the tangible, this theoretical concern is named the "material turn" and refers to the problematization of what objects want, what they do, how they influence people, or in short, what their agency is. This position is influenced by Bruno Latour's *Actor-Network Theory* which argues that the world exists through assemblages composed not only of interconnected humans as sole agents but also of many other diverse nonhuman entities, which he calls actants (2005). The main point to take from Latour is that all co-constitutive entities in interactions should be viewed as active participators, or in his terms "mediators," because they have the power to transform and change the networks in which they are involved (2005: 108, 216–217, 240–241). Along with these Latour's insights, Karen Barad (2007) provides an invaluable perspective in what she names "Agential Realism." Here, she stresses the importance of relation-making between distinct entities such as humans, objects, other biological organisms, or any other possible beings or things, because their active mutual associations create some phenomenon and give it a meaningful nature (Barad 2007: 128, 141). These conceptualizations, along with some others, have been adopted by several leading theoretical archaeologists, who have created their own approaches aimed specifically at archaeological research and often termed the "material turn," which refers to a shift in focus from exclusive human agency to that of inanimate things (see Hicks 2010). Well-known examples include the works of Bjørnar Olsen (2010; 2012), Christopher Witmore (2007; Olsen and Witmore 2015), and Ian Hodder (2012; 2016), and can be found under the headings of *symmetrical archaeology* and *entanglement theory*. These bring forth the concepts of "posthumanism," "flat ontologies," and "new materialism," and attempt to move

away from an anthropocentric perspective to one that is object-centered, which means giving more credit to the influence and meaning of the material world *per se*, instead of regarding it as a passive scenery or bearer of symbolic meaning assigned to it by humans.

The "material turn" has influenced the field of Roman archaeology as well. Chris Gosden used this perspective almost twenty years ago (2005), but his article did not spark wider discussion at the time. In the last decade, however, an increasing number of advocates propose leveraging this perspective to overcome the conceptual baggage and shortcomings of the Romanization theory, but also the approaches that oppose it. In other words, it has been suggested that the focus on material agency should move the theoretical and practical efforts of Roman archaeology forward and save it from the unproductive interpretational spiral that revolves around questions of imperialism, power, discourse, symbolism, being Roman or native, and similar themes that have been studied over the last three decades. The main proponents of this approach are Miguel John Versluys and Martin Pitts with their concepts of *Romanization 2.0* (Versluys 2014; 2021; Pitts 2021), *inter-artefactual domain* (borrowed from Alfred Gell: Pitts 2019), and especially *objectscapes* (Versluys 2017; Pitts 2019), which was recently explained in the manifesto (Pitts and Versluys 2021) and can be epitomized as follows:

> An objectscape refers to the material and stylistic properties of a repertoire of objects in a given period and geographic range. Unlike the archaeological notion of the assemblage, which consists of a discrete, quantifiable and static group of objects that share an archaeological context, an objectscape comprises a dynamic repertoire of objects in motion. Some elements of this repertoire may be more locally distributed (e.g. coarseware pottery), with other elements circulating more widely and featuring greater volatility in their contextual configurations (e.g. fineware pottery and silver plate). Whereas 'assemblage' is commonly used to denote intra-site artefact configurations, 'objectscape' is better suited to working with more expansive and fluid conglomerations of objects, at the scales of whole sites, periods and regions. An objectscape therefore maps a portion of space-time. (Pitts and Versluys 2021: 368)
>
> Indeed, by prioritising relationality within a koine of things, the notion of objectscapes allows the phenomenon of *standardised* styles, designs and objects to be understood as having impacts through their particularisation in specific historical contexts. With objectscapes, however, the focus is not on the strategies of the human bricoleurs, but rather on the repertoire's local impact through its genealogy, and how this genealogy has an important role in conditioning an object's subsequent trajectories. (Pitts and Versluys 2021: 369, original emphasis)

> [A]pproaching the formative period of the later first century BC in terms of objectscapes encourages ideologically driven paradigms, like Romanisation, to be re-conceptualised in terms of the extension and merging of regional inter-artefactual domains, and the impacts of a proliferation of innovating standardised objects borne of new historical conditions of dramatically enhanced connectivity. (Pitts and Versluys 2021: 375, original emphasis)

According to one of its authors, the notion of objectscapes resonates with the more-than-century-old concept of archaeological culture, but with the major difference that "radically rehabilitated version of this concept has much potential, divorced from the reductive connotations of fossilised ethnicities, and applied with greater methodological sophistication than many clumsy 20th century narratives that merely sought to fill in gaps in the record of written history" (Pitts 2019: 18). In other words, contrary to the archaeological culture credo according to which objects stand for ethnicity, objectscape argues that objects stand for themselves.

The work of Astrid van Oyen is also heavily informed by "material turn" arguments and Actor-Network Theory in particular and offers very important insights. In recent studies, she consistently uses the notion of *relational constellations* (which is basically synonymous with assemblages or associations) to denote the agency of things in terms of their networking (or *work-netting* following Latour) with humans and the material practices they are involved in, as well as the effects they create through such connections (2015; 2016; 2017; 2020; Van Oyen and Pitts eds. 2017). In her own words:

> The relational constellations in this paper thus describe things and their agency. This agency is structured by the relations articulated by the material practices in which these things were enrolled—in the case studies below, the material practices of production, analysed via a loose *chaîne opératoire* approach. Because of their defining link to practice, relational constellations are emergent. As such, they force the analyst to go back to the generative processes leading to their emergence, in contrast to formal network concepts, which often describe *post hoc* 'states', not processes. (Van Oyen 2016: 360, original emphasis)

I find this approach particularly helpful and consistent with the original sociological/philosophical relational approach arguments, especially because it does not automatically prioritize certain entities over others within a certain constellation, and because it insists on practice and emergence rather than the insufficiently and abstractly defined overall influence of artefact repertoires (as the concept of objectscape implies). A more balanced and nuanced perspective than extreme object-centered ones is offered by Eva Mol (2017), who underlines exercising high caution

when overemphasizing objects’ forms, styles, distributions, and agencies at the expense of other entities that are related to them in various ways. There have also been other attempts to implement some post-humanist perspectives, but they were not exclusively oriented towards material culture and considered the relationalities of various entities with humans in the Roman period, as in the volume edited by Irene Selsvold and Lewis Webb (2020).

The reactions to these approaches within archaeology were immediate, and they particularly contested the too strong embracement of the notion of objects as independent actors and entities not subjected to humans but rather equal to them in ontological terms as well as to other categories of being (thus “flat ontology”). The proposed approach that archaeology should appreciate and fully focus on materialities’ potential to provide object-centered historical analysis and rewrite the knowledge of the past was accordingly also strongly objected. The critics were mostly afraid that focusing on things as prime actors of historical explanation empties human agency of any responsibilities or the dark sides of its outcomes, and provides an excellent excuse for historical denials of atrocities committed by humans under the aegis of various violent and extreme ideologies (Barrett 2014; 2016; Kiel 2017; see the debate in the Special Section of *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* Vol. 31/3 [2021]: 455–549). Similar concerns have been raised regarding the application of the “material/ontological turn” and posthumanist perspectives within Roman archaeology, which are exemplified in the debate section of *Antiquity* Vol. 94/378 [2020]: 1630–1656). The main critique revolves around the danger of “sanitizing the past” by removing the role of humans and ideologies together with their accountability. Hence, the leading debaters argue:

> Our issue with this object-agency approach is that it represents a soft-culturalist perspective that offers an unbalanced view of the workings of imperialism, marginalising hard power, violence and extreme social hierarchies... [T]he concept of ‘flat ontologies’, as advanced by proponents of symmetrical archaeology under the inspiration of actor-network theory, often fails to identify inequality, power differences and causal relationships effectively. This can limit archaeology’s capacity for social critique, a weakness that is particularly evident when trying to understand strongly hierarchical state formations, such as the Roman Empire. (Fernández-Götz, Maschek and Roymans 2020: 1631)

Accordingly, there is a peril in describing the past as a process that unfolded through trajectories of things in an inevitable way and without the willing and conscious doings of humans, while simultaneously downplaying or leaving aside ethics and “detracting from the darkest aspects of

social life in Rome and other imperial powers" (Fernández-Götz, Maschek and Roymans 2020: 1632).

Indeed, the "material turn" can be seen as the culmination of the earlier-initiated questioning and dismissal of Roman imperialism as a useful analytical concept stemming from globalization theory. This approach already had the weaknesses of depersonalizing and implying teleology in the Roman Empire's (materialities) expansion processes, as well as tentatively making them analogous to early modern and modern Western capitalism contexts and neoliberal standpoints (Mihajlović and Janković 2018: 6–12 with bibliography). With the advance of object-centered perspectives, these problematic aspects further increased, resulting in some dubious and hasty interpretations that truly marginalize power relations and the role of (human-instigated and manipulated) practices (see Gardner 2021; McGuire 2021). On the other hand, opponents somewhat overreact and exaggerate the danger of the "material turn" by viewing "posthuman" as an a priori antihuman discourse that fails to answer or erroneously approaches some crucial questions, regardless of whether its proponents intended to raise and address them at all. Much of the misunderstanding also springs from implicit or insufficiently informed comprehensions of what initial theories under the headings of "ontological turn" or posthumanism actually propose. Particularly, many problems arise when archaeologists selectively and idiosyncratically employ some principles and detach them from their original meanings and explanatory intention, which then (among other archaeologists) causes negative reactions and automatic aversion towards posthumanist theories in general (see Crellin and Harris 2021). For example, it is more often the case that Latour, Barad, and others are both positively cited and principally disputed, without specific pages or exact quotations, than there are instances of deeply engaging analyses, discussions, and rebuttals of their work with respect to archaeology.

Attempt at synthesis?

As is often the case, there is merit and useful thought stimuli on both sides of the debate. Posthumanist perspectives, in my view, really can provide a new viewpoint for understanding the past (Mihajlović 2020b). The notion of relationality is particularly informative, and there is no doubt that any phenomenon in the world is composite and co-constituted by multiple entities of various sorts. Hence, any entity, be it a monarchy, economy, slavery, ruler, worker, grave, or monument, originates from particular connections and intersections of ontologically different "particles"

that enter a specific mutual interplay. This means that every phenomenon around us can be comprehended not as stable and unchanging single body or as a simple sum of independent, self-standing ontological units, but as a relational association that becomes what it is and reaches its full capacity each time particular parts assemble and interact in particular way (Latour 2005; Barad 2007: DeLanda 2016). For example, warriors on horseback become what they are and reach their full potential only through a specific assemblage of human and animal bodies, equipment, engagement with the enemy, and practice of skills that are enabled and fully fledged only in situations when all of these factors associate (see DeLanda 2016: 68–69, 71). A rider without a horse, panoply, and war practice is, according to this view, a phenomenon that has not reached its total form and potential, precisely because s/he is not associated with other actors of the assemblage. Each of the entities involved in this exemplary “relational association” has an agency of its own, while the absence of either prevents the phenomenon from emerging and unfolding in a particular capacity and manner. This perspective can also illuminate the agency of materiality, as our species indeed makes things and lives with various sorts of objects, which cannot be regarded as mere utilities, passive symbols, or material representations of the inner human world of thoughts and imagination. Instead, they are closely associated with humans, enabling and triggering their actions, feelings, conditions, states etc., which means that they can be defined as enablers or disablers of assemblages they co-create.

However, contrary to the extreme object-centered standpoint, materiality cannot be treated in isolation or given agential priority, since we must always remember that it is only one of the constitutive parts of relational networks. In explaining any phenomenon or historical process from an archaeological vantage point, emphasizing materiality and objects alone and leaving aside other co-constitutive components of an ensemble is insufficient. Namely, some archaeological interpretations overemphasize the role of objects, even attempting to see them as autonomous parts of assemblages/constellations, supposing that their flows and trajectories were somehow independent of humans and freed of ideas and ideologies that drove associated people and by which they acted upon. Nevertheless, constellations (i.e. assemblages, associations, entanglements, or meshworks) of humans, things, and environmental and biological entities cannot be presumed to be divorced from ideas and ideologies that human actors bring to the relationships they enter. The “posthumanist” line of thinking never automatically denied the power and importance of ideas in the emergence of some phenomena, and posthumanist theories in general, at least those I refer to, see conceptual comprehensions and meanings as equally important parts of relational assemblages, while making

no claims of symmetry between humans and non-humans (Latour 1996; 2005: 31–41, 71–72, 75–76, 240–241; Barad 2007: 25–26, 33–34, 56, 131, 139; DeLanda 2016: 20; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 39). In other words, just as it is impossible to comprehend humanity without considering its attachments to various kinds of entities, it is also impossible to comprehend relational associations by taking into account only things or things + humans + other organisms while neglecting the ideological features that humans bring to co-created relations. What I mean by this is that humans do not associate with things, the environment, and other beings in free, random, and completely open ways that could result in an endless variety of outcomes. Instead, the process of mutual relating always involves concepts and conceptualization, conscious and free, or unconscious and forced decisions, that necessarily affect the associations and contribute to their specificities. It seems that material and ontological turns, object-centered approaches, and overenthusiastic focuses on materiality often overlook this aspect of relational constellations. For example, materiality-oriented perspectives commonly refer to objects that travelled, moved, or were innovated, transformed, wanted, etc., forgetting that things are rarely able to do so without the agency of humans (and other co-constituents) and in ways that are determined by people who have conceptions of how they can relate with inanimate things. Therefore, I argue that although the material turn does have potential and invites us to think in more complex and broader terms about the world, it should not be divorced from the ideational component of any assemblage.

One of the possible ways to understand and employ posthumanist/material turn insights is to comprehend it in a way proposed by Holbraad and Pedersen (2017). Drawing from their previous work presented within the volume *Thinking through Things*, they characterize the proposed approach as methodological rather than ontological:

> [T]he argument of TTT [*Thinking through Things*] could be designated as 'post-posthumanist', in that it takes on board the Latourian suggestion that the distinction between people and things is ontologically arbitrary, but adds (contra Latour among others) that, this being so, the solution for elevating the analytical status of the thing must not be to bind it to an alternative ontological order (e.g. that of collectives, assemblages or the Actor Network), but rather to free it from any ontological determination whatsoever. (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 210)
>
> [T]he strategy must be one that is capable of effectively *de-theorizing* the thing, by emptying it out of its many analytical connotations, rendering it a purely ethnographic 'form' ready to be filled out contingently, according only to its own ethnographic exigencies. This, then, is what treating the thing as a 'heuristic' means: using ordinary, unreconstructed, 'modern'

> ontological assumptions just as a *tag for identifying it as an object of ethnographic study*. This, according to TTT, is the prime step towards allowing things to dictate their own terms of analytical engagement: to be able to talk about them 'as such', without allowing the language we use to prejudice our analysis of what they might actually *be*. (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 211, original emphasis)

They also suggest that following this initial step, it is necessary to "treat what informants say and do around things as manners of defining what those things are" (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 211–213). Their focus is, of course, anthropological work with living people, but what is important here is their further insistence on the methodological move that they define using the formula "concepts=things ↔ things=concepts": "if concepts can define things, then things can also define concepts" which means that things' "conceptual affordances" are at stake here (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 216–217). Additionally, as the empirical basis for such a methodological approach, they cite the material characteristics of a thing itself:

> With what other 'stuff' can things feed their conceptualizations, after all, then the very stuff that makes them what they are, as 'things'? So, the data that make a (conceptual) difference, in this case, are no longer what people say and do around things, but rather what we hear, see, smell, taste and touch of the thing as we find it (heuristically) as such. (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 218)

As a result, Holbraad and Pedersen term this perspective "pragmatological": "Emphasizing the origination of thinking *from* (as opposed to just through) things, the term designates the activity of extracting concepts from things (*pragmata*) as a distinctive analytic technique" (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 239, original emphasis). They also point out that the exploration of its potential would be particularly worthwhile in archeology as the field with minimal human input about the things it studies (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017: 240).

To this perspective, I would further add a suggestion made by DeLanda concerning the macro and micro relationality of associations/assemblages/constellations:

> Assemblages emerge from the interactions between their parts, but once an assemblage is in place it immediately starts acting as a source of limitations and opportunities for its components (downward causality). (DeLanda 2016: 21)
>
> [T]he properties of a whole are produced by the ongoing interactions between its parts, while the whole, once it is stabilised, reacts back on its parts. One of the forms that downward causality takes is *selective*, the whole

> promoting the exercise of some of its parts' capacities, while inhibiting others. But we can also add another form that is easier to conceive thanks to the parametrised version of the concept of assemblage: if both parts and wholes are assemblages, then they both have their own parameters, and this implies that changes in the settings of the whole's parameters can affect the settings of those of its parts, and vice versa. (DeLanda 2016: 83, original emphasis)

To simplify the argument, components add qualities to the associations they co-constitute, but emerging constellations inform the components back, enabling, disabling, stimulating, inhibiting, emphasizing, changing, or adding new features and capacities to particular mediators.

Roman Empire, hegemony, and "relational associations"

To operationalize the aforementioned approaches to Roman Empire studies, some of the basic premises of the Empire's functioning must be reiterated. First, it was undeniably a networked structure that was not randomly assembled but rather according to the logic of ordering by hierarchization (see e.g. Peachin ed. 2011). In other words, the Empire's interconnectivity followed the hierarchical pattern of more or less clearly defined and ranked categories of people, but also of land, things, natural resources, supernatural beings, etc. This included large divisions of free or enslaved people, senators, equestrians, common citizens and noncitizens, as well as age and gender differentiations and many other divisions based on profession, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, etc. What was conspicuous in the Roman Empire was the all-pervasive notion of superior and inferior sides in any interaction, and it was by default that some individuals and groups, along with the related materialities and non-human organisms, were deemed more entitled to power and privileges than others. This is of course a well-known fact, but it is important to note that Roman imperial ideologies and practices enabled the spread of exactly this sort of networking across space, time, and diverse communities. The expansion of imperialistic networking occurred both vertically and horizontally, pulling in more and more participants and relations, all of which were, at least loosely, ordered via hierarchical templates. Vertically, it spread divisions based on unequally distributed economic, social, and political resources, while horizontally, it established strata according to class, profession, and gender (Mihajlović and Janković 2018: 12–14 with bibliography). This is why it is entirely justified, at least in basic and theoretical terms, to regard the Roman Empire as a vast assemblage

of hierarchized relationalities encompassing millions of individual human actors and determining their roles and positions. These differently privileged or unprivileged groups of people had their own more-or-less distinct practices, behaviors, attitudes, and lifestyles, which we often define as separate cultures or subcultures.

Therefore, examining the Roman Empire from a posthumanist perspective, focusing on objects and, in particular, studying their agency, is impossible in a vacuum and without taking into consideration the abovementioned specificities. If we combine these with the previously discussed standpoints of Holbraad, Pedersen, and DeLanda, this would mean that: 1) being in relational associations together with humans, things are inevitably connected to conceptual features of a given assemblage; and 2) things are not neutral aspects of relational associations because they are inseparably linked to power (they create and enable it by participating in its articulation and realization) and are not mutually equal. Given that the Roman Empire's *modus operandi* was determined and ordered in accordance with the logic of hierarchy, relational associations were naturally imbued with the notion of unequal ranks. In other words, hierarchy was established and constantly reemerged precisely through the relations of people, things, natural environment, etc., and these relations inevitably involved an uneven distribution of power as well as certain ideologizations. For example, to give a superficial heuristic illustration, the class of senators was constituted of individuals and family groups who were connected to some portions of land and other resources, had specific relations to people outside their collective, were associated with military and political activities, and were empowered by the means of ideology, the political system, and legislation. Nevertheless, they also came to be what they were due to many material facets unique to their position, such as lavish houses, luxurious objects, special clothes and vehicles, etc. To this one may add specific behaviors, practices, and attitudes expressed through specific rituals, consumption, taste, and cultural preferences. It was all of these components combined and ideologized in specific ways that created the senators as a separate social group. On the other hand, slaves, the category at the bottom of the hierarchical scale, emerged as underprivileged, having been denied the possibility to relate to land, common social rights, positions, ways of life, and things, and forced to instead interconnect with other practices, materialities, and relationships that constituted their living condition and overall status. The discrepancies and asymmetries between these two kinds of relational constellations are obvious, and their drastically contrasting impregnation with power is undeniable. Focusing on the objects and materialities of these examples, one could say that, for example, the "proper" association and usage of things such as Gemma Au-

gustea, a bronze portrait statue, and a master bedroom in a Baiae coastal villa entered and specified the relational assemblage of senators, whereas things such as fetters, ownership collars, kitchens, or *ergastulum* within the coastal villa created associations pertaining to the phenomenon of slavery. Any of these objects and their intended "proper"/expected roles were alien to the opposing relational association, and if some of them ever entered their antipode, that would have reconfigured and redefined the character and meaning of the association. To illustrate, a fettered senator would change the association and represent a radical break from previous "regular" relationalities that determined his position and agency, just as a slave at the owner's banquette table served by his master would constitute a temporarily reversed (festivity) state of *Saturnalia*, similar to how Trimalchio's dinner party atmosphere and everything it entangled created an "aberrative" (non-normative) relational constellation.

To summarize, humans and things do not come together randomly but are related via the agency of ideology in its widest sense. Additionally, it is worth noting that this determines the ordering of relational associations and, concurrently, the diverse meanings, values, and roles of particular objects. Things get associated with ideas, concepts, principles, and humans, and due to their regular involvement in particular assemblages, they are deemed and treated in specific ways. Furthermore, some relational assemblages are more strongly tied to power and have a greater capacity to influence other constellations comprised of humans and nonhumans. Hence, it is reasonable to presume that different materialities also have varying kinds and degrees of agency, and contrary to arguments of the "material turn" and object-oriented perspectives, they cannot be comprehended as separate from ideologies and discourses of power, but as integrally entangled and synergically agential with them. Relational associations can be considered more or less ideologically charged, and the same pertains to their material components. Consequently, relational associations imbued with power are prone to discipline, include, or exclude, to have preferences for some entities or practices while rejecting others. Due to their ideologization and the inevitable existence of actors with greater capacities to manipulate the assemblage and how it operates, there will always be favoritism, resistance, restrictions, and evictions towards certain humans or things. This means that when relational constellations expand and include participants of whatever ontological kind, they do so with particular selectivity while simultaneously excluding others. Again, when it comes to materiality, this would mean that objects do not flow and have random trajectories but are actually sensitive to certain discriminations or rules of choice and refusal connected to a given relational association.

Some Pannonian-Balkan case studies

Let me now try to make these points less theoretically dense and apply them to a couple of case studies. The first one comes from the highlands of the eastern part of the province of Dalmatia, situated in what is today the village and valley of Kremna in western Serbia. Recently discovered and currently investigated,[5] this site contains well-preserved remnants of an earthen stronghold dating from the 1st century CE and belonging to the type of temporary fort or marching camp (Fig. 1). Along with being the only known example of such a site in Serbia, and one of the few preserved to such an extent in general, the camp is shrouded with various unknowns and there are several hypotheses yet to be checked. But from the viewpoint of the relational association argument, some instructive insights can be drawn. First, there is the fact that this architectural intervention made a long-lasting impact on the micro-regional landscape that survived for nearly two thousand years. Besides the fact that the specific materiality of the site created landmark and spatial references, which later sparked folklore explanations and the interest of archaeologists, this structure is also telling in light of the Roman period's relationalities. As a specific type of built environment intimately tied to the institution of the Roman army, the earthen and wooden walls, double trench, and entrance barricades, together with the soldiers, conceptions, knowledge, and materialities they were connected to, as well as the beasts of burden, animals, and plants for food supply, and the spatial characteristics of the landscape, were all entities that collectively made the phenomenon of the Roman army in the area. Moreover, it was their specific interrelation that made the Empire existent, tangible, real, and active. In other words, both the Roman Empire and one of its most important institutions emerged and existed in this particular place and area via specific interrelations of various entities concentrated on the camp's location. The associations created in, around, and with the fort made the power real, both in terms of armed brute force and the ideological aspect of Roman imperialism and rule. However, the effect of the camp was not an open-ended network, but to the contrary, a restrictive system that allowed for selected actors and entities to associate, and this of course depended on the ideologies and practices of imperialism. In short, this fort, like many others, became what it was only through a specific interplay of associated entities, and it simultaneously both constituted and was constituted by the phenomenon of the Roman army and power. What is more, this perspective shows us that any rela-

5 The project is funded by the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Serbia and the City of Užice.



Figure 1. Remains of the marching camp in Kremna, eastern Dalmatia (photo: Aleksandar Bandović)

tional assemblage and the outcome it creates is not a stable phenomenon, but rather has a specific temporality: it exists only when co-constitutive entities mutually interact. In the case of the Kremna fort, this would mean that it only assembled and created the institution of the Roman army and power during the period when it was associated with other actors and actants. After the soldiers, animals, and movable materialities had left, and the woodwork was dismantled, only the rampart, trenches, and barricades stood at their places. Stripped of relations with other elements of the assemblage, these structures became an integral part of a space that they had transformed for centuries to come and go. More importantly, they were presumably associated with other people and non-human entities and entered new assemblages with characteristics and meanings different than the initial one. In other words, these structures were co-constitutive elements of the Roman fort only in a specific relational constellation, after whose dispersion they entered new association(s), the characteristics and meaning of which we cannot specify. To summarize, the Kremna structure cannot be comprehended in its full complexity if we regard it, in the traditional way, as yet another example of Roman military functionality,

nor can it be adequately explained if we consider only the symbolic meanings it could have generated. It is also impossible to appreciate the intricacy of human and non-human relationality if we view the fort through an object-centered lens as a category of materiality with an affordance that generated agency and impacts independently and in its own right. Instead, it is only productive to consider all possible participants involved in its emergence, as well as their multidirectional interrelations.

Similar points can be made if we consider the SE portion of Pannonia Inferior, which is now in the Serbian part of the region of Syrmia. The emergence of the Roman provincial setting in these parts of the Empire involved a considerable transformation of the earlier Iron Age spatial and settlement pattern, as the Roman rule marked the end of enclosed settlements, the gradual creation of the Danube frontier zone with its many and various structures, the division of land, and the foundation of Roman settlements of types unknown to late Iron age communities. This change, which was probably intense from a local perspective, can be viewed as a profound shift in relationalities that brought the local and imperial networks together and put them at work. This, of course, happened at different levels and spheres of life and was accomplished by interpersonal networking and the creation of new relational assemblages based on the general imperial ideology of hierarchy and defined social roles. Although it is easiest, and basically true, to imagine this as face-to-face interactions between imperial and local actors who established mutual bonds, spheres of interest, cooperation, privileges, and relationships, this cannot be separated from other entities and materialities that were involved in the process. The creation of the province involved alterations to the landscape, new kinds of relations with and uses of land and other natural resources, the introduction of previously unused animals and plants, novel worldviews, concepts, knowledge, and ways of expression, practices, and behaviors, as well as associations with new sorts and types of objects, both architectural and portable. Depending on who associated with what and how, new provincial relational associations emerged, some of which were imbued with greater capacities and more directly linked to power (Mihajlović 2020c). The remains of the town of *Bassianae* are a good case in point (Dušanić 1967; Milin 2004). Although it was not systematically excavated, thanks to new detecting methods that were recently applied,[6] we can now have a look at the settlement that closely followed the Roman urban conception. As obvious from the LiDAR scanning (Fig. 2), the town had the principal west-east communication axis, as well as a rectan-

6 Thanks to the financial support of the Provincial Secretariat for Culture and Public Information of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.



Figure 2. LiDAR image of Bassianae (Donji Petrovci),
SE Pannonia Inferior (image processing: Jugoslav Pendić)

gular grid, with intersections of main and smaller streets and spaces that can be recognized as public areas. Of course, all of this is well known in other cases throughout the Empire's former area. However, the replication of the familiar and to some extent standardized plan in the case of Bassianae in the 2nd and 3rd centuries illustrates the point of materiality being purposefully selected and associated with at least some of the basic ideas of Roman urban life. The specifically built environment was the consequence of a clearly defined type, layout, and style of architecture, and firmly associated with concepts of urbanity, preferable political organization, cultural preferences, economic activities, and public behavior (Laurence, Esmonde-Cleary and Sears 2011). Certainly, each town in the

Empire had its own local peculiarities and divergences from the imagined ideal standards (Creighton 2006; Revell 2009), but what was important was that there were fixed conceptualizations of how a town's materialities should look and function, and what life preferences should go with them in accordance with the concepts of urbanity and citizenship. This was obviously closely linked with issues of social, political, economic, cultural, and other powers, which is again why it is impossible to treat relational constellations and objects within them as deprived of ideology and separated from notions of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, more or less valued and influential. Consequently, more powerful assemblages (and templates they had promoted as preferable) impacted people and other assemblages, as they imposed the standards of normative or desirable features of any given kind. Therefore, with all the nuances that certainly existed in the wide range of particular cases, it is impossible to understand the materiality of any Roman town, at macro and micro levels alike, as autonomous, power- and idea-free, and without relations with other entities of an assemblage. Although urban materialization was the built environment with the capacity to predetermine spatial aspects in the long run, this did not happen by itself, but in correlation with other co-constitutive factors, all structured by the ideology of proper mutual associations.

Previous points also apply to other categories of materialities, such as various classes of portable objects. To further illustrate this point, I will briefly discuss another example from the Balkan-Pannonian area. The Tekija hoard was accidentally found in 1948 on the right bank of the Danube near the military camp of Transdierna (Mano-Zisi 1957; Popović ed. 1994: 108–109 and catalogue nos. 32–45, 162–178). It seems that treasure was hidden within the room of some Roman period building between 81 and 85 CE or a few years later, perhaps in the context of Domitian's conflict with Decebalus. The content of the find makes it both interesting and very difficult to interpret as it comprised the monetary part of 111 Roman Republican and Imperial *denarii*, eight golden and ninety silver objects, including jewelry, pieces of military belts, two silver *paterae* and a ladle, spoons, cosmetic instruments, and silver votive plaques (Fig. 3). The peculiar thing is that the assembled objects had markedly different origins in terms of production areas: some of them were obviously of local origin and resembled the jewelry style found in the "Dacian hoards"; others, such as belts, could be regarded as Roman products, while the icons with specific deities and Hellenistic traits were supposedly made either in Thrace or Eastern Mediterranean (Mano-Zisi 1957). Additionally, one belt weapon-hanging button bore the name *G. Valerius Crescens,* who served in the centuria of *Verres*, while one belt



Figure 3. Part of the Tekija hoard of objects of local, “Roman” and “oriental” provenance (objects are not in scale; © National Museum of Serbia, reproduced with permission).

fitting bore the inscription of centuria *Axsi*. Furthermore, both *paterae* had the abbreviation *Vale(ri)* inscribed on their backsides, which could indicate the ownership of the same Valerius. Accordingly, since its discovery, it was debated as to whom these objects might have belonged: was it a Roman soldier who never returned from campaigns in Dacia; was he of oriental origin or a worshipper of eastern cults; or was the owner a prominent local figure who managed to accumulate great wealth of both domestic and imported objects (see Janković 2014). These questions are followed by speculations about how all of these things were acquired: since there is male and female jewelry, luxurious military belts, local, Roman and Hellenistic style objects, is it possible that this was the result of a soldier's plunder or, to the contrary, was this family wealth, horded over several generations? From the point of the relational constellation argument, several aspects can be further added. The hoarded objects must have belonged to a well-connected person (or persons), who had access to both the, relatively termed, "local" and "imperial global" repertoires of valuable objects, and who most likely held some nodal position in supra-regional networking that allowed for the collection of this mixed group of valuables. As the treasure was an outcome of decisions about what to save and hoard, it cannot be explained only by the affordance of the objects, their sheer availability, or face value. Instead, the evidently costly and rare items were an integral part of relational associations involving wealthy and powerful people, and together with other features and entities, co-constituted them as distinctive phenomena, be it a prominent officer, a local leader who was directly or indirectly connected to the frontier zone army, or somebody who had access and intention to possess the objects. The urge to obtain, save, and manipulate exactly these types of artifacts is again telling: they drew a certain profile of people because being associated with these objects allowed for the acquisition of a certain social position, membership in a privileged group, power, as well as signaling overall individual and collective capacity. Sets of such and similar materialities, along with associated ideologies and practices, allowed for the establishment of individual and collective roles and status demarcations. These objects were tied to performativity, had their own agency and tangible features, but they also had signified meanings and associated ideological discourses. Thus arose the tendency towards their selection, usage and safekeeping, as well as the role of one among the features of privileged cultural preferences. In other words, these artifacts were circulated, praised, cherished, and associated with because of their links to other elements and qualities of the exclusive and power-charged relational constellations.

In conclusion, relational associations that favor certain materialities, humans, practices, worldviews, natural environments, and resources can be defined as hegemonic (on the concept in Gramscian sense see: Jackson Lears 1985; Jones 2006: 41–79). Some assemblages have obviously privileged positions and roles, and directly or indirectly influence desirability, choices, and attitudes, as well as ways in which relations between different entities are constituted and what their features are. They impact the desires, inhibitions, behaviors, and capacities of other people. They represent the role models and frameworks for value judgments, ambitions, and frustrations because they tend to discipline worldviews, practices, behaviors, tastes, self-reflections, rationalizations, sense of personhood, and belonging. Others, which are less evidently entangled with power, force, and hierarchy, are nevertheless related to hegemonic distributions since they inevitably operate, exist with, intersect, and interact (as wholes or through mediators) with associations that are more overtly hegemonic (think of, say, an "innocent" example of everyday agricultural activities on a small Roman-period farm or any other similar prosaic case). Therefore, we have to acknowledge that certain materialities have (and had) greater agency than others, owing to their correlation with imbued hegemonic qualities and the roles they play in generating power. Their distribution is not haphazard and random and they cannot be seen as a realm separate from and insensitive to other kinds of entities, including ideologies and conceptions. Hence, the task of archeology is to constantly seek understanding of how material was related to human, immaterial/conceptual, and biological, and what effects, realities, and abstractions these associations produced.

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"INVENTING" HUNTER-GATHERERS (AND OTHERS): HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS, NARRATIVES, AND THE DIVERSITY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Abstract: Following recent debates on the implications and usefulness of the term *hunter-gatherer*, this paper explores whether there are particular ways of writing hunter-gatherer relations with animals, particularly from an archaeozoological and anthrozoological perspective. This question is bound to elicit new ones; namely, if indeed specific, how do such narratives differ from those woven in archaeologies concerned with other cultural contexts? I here reflect on my own writings on two distinct faunal assemblages (from a Mesolithic-Neolithic and a medieval context), as well as the different interpretations I offered, the language I used, and the themes I engaged with. While there are obvious reasons why certain themes and theoretical approaches figure more prominently in studies of particular time periods, it is worth examining the underlying assumptions wrapped around such practices. Ultimately, in considering these issues, I draw from relational and multispecies approaches that reject radical alterities and instead engage with the diversity of lived experience.

Keywords: hunter-gatherers, prehistoric and historical archaeologies, archaeological narratives, human-animal relations, relational ontologies, multispecies assemblages, lived experience

Introduction

How do we weave narratives about hunter-gatherers? After all, the various lifestyles, forms of social organization, and ways of relating to the environment that we lump under the term *hunter-gatherer* have constituted the largest part of human history. Apart from its conventional usage to designate past and contemporary societies "subsisting on the 'natural

produce' of the earth by hunting and trapping wild animals, gathering wild roots, fruits, and berries, fishing, and collecting honey of wild bees, as opposed to producing food by agriculture and herding," this term has come to stand for "an alien Other, diversely constructed by modernity in order to define itself" (Bird-David 2015, 428). In the words of Tim Ingold, "hunter-gatherers occupy a special place in the structure of modern thought, so special, that had they not existed they would certainly have had to have been invented (which, to a large extent, they *have* been)" (Ingold 1999, 55).

In Western scholarship concerned with the pursuit of origins, hunter-gatherers have come a long way from the idealized, noble savages of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Hobbesian nasty brutes, the initial stages of humanity in the works of Charles Darwin and Friedrich Engels, and the antithesis to European bourgeois society (Kuper 1988; Ingold 1999; 2000; Bird-David 2015; Graeber and Wengrow 2021; Warren 2021), to becoming the "original affluent society" (Sahlins 1998), a superior lifestyle to the "mistake" that was the Neolithic (Diamond 1987), and "self-conscious political subjects" (Graeber and Wengrow 2021). More recently, indigenous perspectives – often associated with hunter-gatherer traditions – have been instrumental in postcolonial and ecological criticisms amidst global climate change (Crate and Nuttal 2009; Bird Rose 2022), as well as in revealing other possible ways of relating to the world beyond Nature-Culture dualisms (Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2014; Bird-David 1999; Ingold 2000; Descola 2013; Kohn 2013).

In archaeology, too, the concept of hunter-gatherers conveys a plethora of meanings. Concerned with the vast time span from early human origins to the advent of agriculture, the hunter-gatherer research in archaeology relied heavily on anthropology and the ethnographic record (Elliott and Warren 2022), which came to be understood as highly varied, including both egalitarian, hierarchical, and even slave-owning societies (Bird-David 2015; Graeber and Wengrow 2021). Depending on various criteria such as the manner of food preparation, storage, and sharing, the presence of burials, architectural features, imagery, exchange networks, the level of sedentism, and how "far along" they were on the road to (agricultural) "modernity," hunter-gatherers were envisaged either as "simple" or "complex" (Arnold 1996). Moreover, studies of hunter-gatherers across the globe followed distinct, highly contextual paths, for example in colonized or colonizing nations (Warren 2021).

With such a deep-time, complex, and diverse record laden with layers of meaning, is there a common denominator, a shared set of features that set these societies apart from everybody else? The implications and

the usefulness of the term were recently questioned by Graeme Warren in his paper *Is There Such a Thing as Hunter-Gatherer Archaeology?* (Warren 2021). Following Nurit Bird-David's notion of "partly shared features" (e.g. foraging, band societies anchored in kinship and sharing, inhabiting and forming social relations with a "giving environment," relational knowledge and ontologies), which afford certain anthropological perspectives (Bird-David 2015), Warren explored whether such features can be associated with the archaeological record and, if indeed distinctive, whether hunter-gatherer archaeology can be defined by the materiality of the evidence or the themes it engages with. He concluded that the term carries problematic colonial undertones and encompasses significant diversity, but remains a useful label for archaeologists, anthropologists, and indigenous communities to come together and form networks based on shared interests, exchange ideas and perspectives, and ultimately challenge it (Warren 2021).

In this paper, I address these issues from the perspective of my own field – archaeozoology (or zooarchaeology). The very concept of *hunter-gatherer* (often accompanied by *fisher*) by definition treats the mode of subsistence as the primary identifier of certain types of societies. At the same time, it evokes mental images of people moving across the landscape, setting traps, stalking, tracking, and encountering various animals, killing them, or being killed by them, bringing the prey back to the camps, processing the carcasses, and sharing food (see Hanson 2021). Although this simplistic view and conventional terminology largely obscure the multifaceted nature of human experience (Bird-David 1994), there still remains something deeply engrained in hunter-gatherer research that makes it intimately bound to animals and their remains from archaeological sites. In Ingold's words, what "we, outside observers, call hunting," involves myriad ways of engaging with nonhuman animals in a social manner (Ingold 2000, 52). Nevertheless, hunting and fishing practices, as well as the variety of interspecies relations they afforded, were by no means exclusive to societies we traditionally lump under the term hunter-gatherer. What kinds of narratives do we weave then based on the faunal record, and is there such a thing as hunter-gatherer (as opposed to any other) archaeozoology?

Writing hunter-fisher-gatherers (and others): A view from archaeozoology

The study of animal bones from archaeological sites has always occupied a prominent position in hunter-gatherer research, not least because they often constituted the only material remnants of past human lifeways.

Moreover, albeit not exclusive to such contexts, the themes inferred from the archaeozoological record – including subsistence, the landscape and the environment, seasonality, and human-animal relations – flourished in hunter-gatherer studies and made significant contributions to the archaeological method and theory in general.

And yet, unlike other culturally specific materials that constitute the archaeological record, the study of animal bones allows archaeozoologists to engage with a variety of cultural contexts across space and time. Ever since archaeozoology became incorporated into standard archaeological practice, the study of faunal remains fluctuated between empirical and interpretative approaches (Živaljević 2013). Given its biological and zoological roots, archaeozoology is bound to perceive animals as "organisms" in order to identify, compare, and measure their skeletal remains as scientific objects. If an animal is always an animal and a bone is always a bone, the archaeozoologist is only expected to provide their specialist knowledge and shift seamlessly from assemblage to assemblage, from one cultural context to another. On the other hand, constructivist approaches in archaeology have regarded human-animal relationships as culturally specific and highly contextual, avoiding any form of essentialism. More recently, the shift in the understanding of human and nonhuman relations as inherently social and mutually constitutive ("the Animal Turn," cf. Ritvo 2007; Haraway 2008) has moved beyond the polarising organism vs. construct view altogether. What Gala Argent identifies as "relational zooarchaeology" should approach animals "as such" (as they live, breathe, and experience the world), while continuing to reflect on "human and animal ways of being within larger-scale social practices in historically particular ways" (Argent 2016, 29).

I here explore the relationship between the analyst, the archaeozoological record, and particular research perspectives inherent to specific archaeologies by comparing faunal assemblages from two vastly different contexts that I had the opportunity to study. The first one – more precisely, three fish faunal assemblages – originated from the Mesolithic-Neolithic sites of Lepenski Vir, Padina, and Vlasac (c. 10,000–5500 cal BC) in the Danube Gorges (Fig. 1), which I analysed over the course of my doctoral research (Živaljević 2017). The second fish faunal assemblage originated from 14th–15th-century waste middens at the medieval monastery of Studenica in Serbia (Fig. 1) (Živaljević et al. 2019). Given that my research primarily focuses on human-animal relations in the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic, the second project represented my first encounter with medieval archaeology. As a result, I undoubtedly brought my hunter-fisher-gatherer "baggage" into it, while also finding myself applying common discourses on the two periods. This is not to say that in doing so I

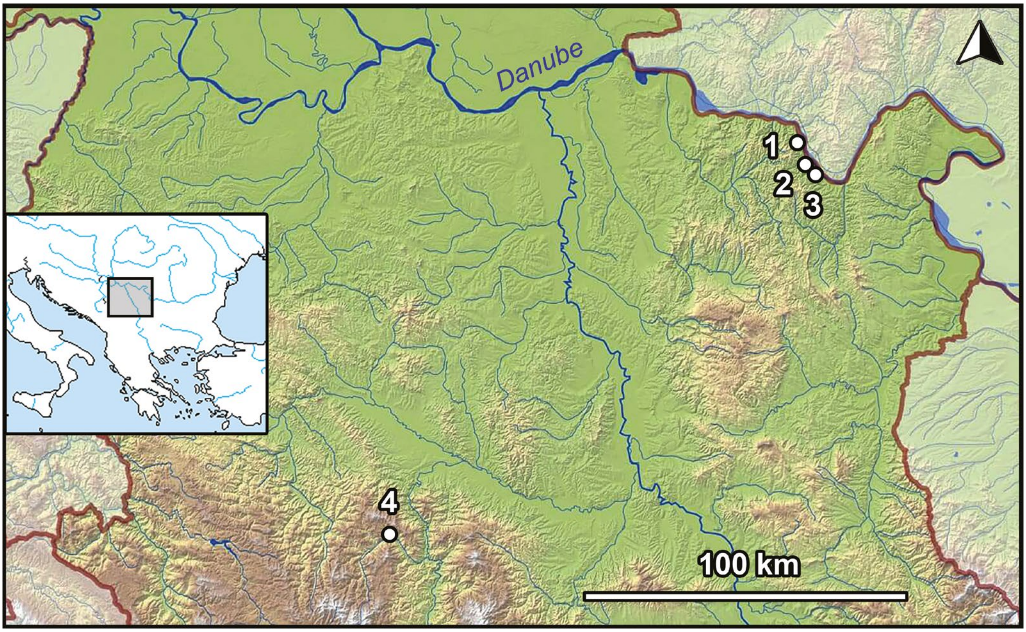


Figure 1. The location of the Mesolithic-Neolithic sites of Padina (1), Lepenski Vir (2), and Vlasac (3) in the Danube Gorges, and the Medieval Studenica Monastery (4) in south-western Serbia.

exhausted all of the diverse strands of thought and perspectives developed in the archaeologies in question. My intention here is to reflect on my own trajectories of writing about hunter-fisher-gatherers, with whom I was more familiar, and about the medieval “others,” where I had just begun to scratch the surface. Therefore, in this paper, the latter stands as a point of departure from my usual discourse on human-animal relations and allows me to reflect on it in greater depth.

The Danube Gorges Mesolithic-Neolithic

The Danube Gorges (or the Iron Gates) refers to several narrow gorges carved by the Danube flowing through the southern Carpathian Mountains in the North-Central Balkans (between present-day Serbia and Romania). From the mid-1960s onward, more than 20 open-air sites and caves were discovered in the area, yielding remarkable evidence of Early Holocene lifeways in a specific riverine environment (Radovanović 1996; Bonsall 2008; Borić 2011). Particular features of the landscape, including the abrupt changes in the riverbed, numerous cataracts, and strong whirlpools, provided optimal conditions for catching fish such as large migra-

tory sturgeon (Petrović 1998; Bartosiewicz et al. 2008; Živaljević 2017). The riverine terraces in the vicinity of such spots certainly attracted local human groups, who frequented them during the Early/Middle Mesolithic (c. 9700–7400 cal BC), and eventually became more permanently attached to them during the Late Mesolithic (c. 7400–6200 cal BC). Ultimately, during the period coinciding with the appearance of the first farmers in the region (c. 6200–6000/5900 cal BC, the Mesolithic-Neolithic Transition) some of these locations (Lepenski Vir and Padina) saw the emergence of complex hunter-fisher-gatherer settlements with reddish limestone trapezoidal-base buildings and sculpted boulders resembling human-fishlike beings (Borić 2011, and references therein).

The Danube, its various dwellers, and human engagement with them permeated all pores of social life. Human attachment to the riverine terraces in the vicinity of strong whirlpools that channelled the movement of fish to the shallows inscribed the landscape with particular meanings and generated *places* (cf. Ingold 2000). Over time, such places became settlements and burial grounds, carefully aligned in relation to the river flow (Srejović 1972; Radovanović 1997; Borić 1999; Živaljević, forthcoming). The significant role of fishing was also manifested in the isotopic record (Bonsall et al. 1997; Borić et al. 2004; Nehlich et al. 2010; Jovanović et al. 2019) and the archaeozoological record (Živaljević 2017). Apart from catching freshwater species such as carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) and other cyprinids, Wels catfish (*Silurus glanis*), and huchen (*Hucho hucho*), the inhabitants of the Danube Gorges settlements were also engaged in seasonal fishing of large sturgeons (the beluga *Huso huso* [Fig. 2a], Russian sturgeon *Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, ship sturgeon *Acipenser nudiventris*, and the stellate sturgeon *Acipenser stellatus*), which migrated from the Black Sea each spring and autumn. Some of them (such as the beluga) were exceptionally large, at times exceeding 5 m in total length (Živaljević et al. 2021). Observing these formidable creatures fighting their way upstream must have been a compelling experience. In archaeological narratives, their perpetual return was associated with specific ways of constructing time and social memory (Borić 1999; 2003), and with particular notions of the flow of corporeal matter (Borić 2005a; Živaljević, forthcoming). Namely, the direction of the Danube running downstream, and the anadromous fish moving both ways, could have added to an understanding of how all things move and change, as manifested in the positioning of the bodies of the deceased parallel to the river (Radovanović 1997). Perhaps the most compelling evidence comes from Lepenski Vir, with its distinctive sandstone boulders interpreted as depictions of sturgeon (Radovanović 1997), i.e., as "volatile bodies" in a "perpetual state of becoming" (Borić 2005a) (Fig. 2b). In a similar vein, I approached burials with human bodies ac-

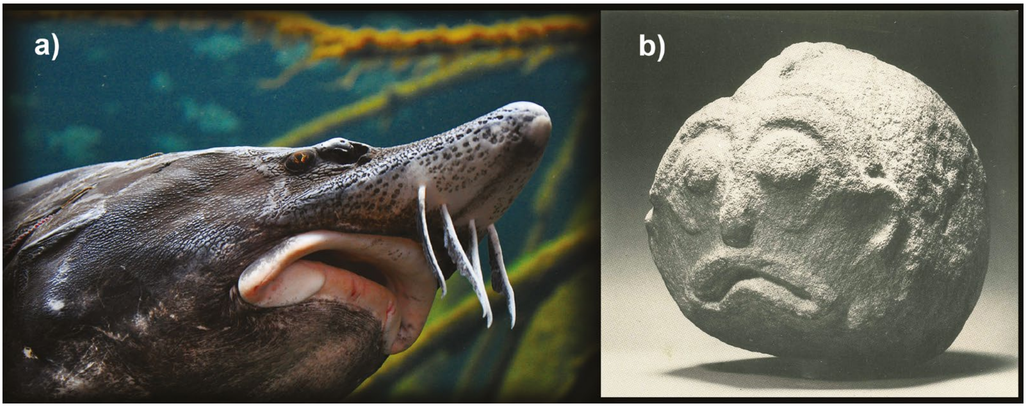


Figure 2. a) Beluga sturgeon (*Huso huso*) with its distinctive down-turned mouth (photo courtesy of Markus Oulehla), and b) a sculpted boulder from Building 57/XLIV at Lepenski Vir (Srejović and Babović 1983, 116).

companied by sturgeon bones or structurally deposited red deer antlers and aurochs skulls and horns as contexts from which new, composite beings emerged (Živaljević 2015; 2017, 171–172).

These themes were far from isolated in Mesolithic research, with ample archaeological evidence of hybrid imagery, animal body parts worn by humans, and burial contexts with intermingled human and animal remains across Europe. From Chantal Conneller's seminal article *Becoming deer. Corporeal transformations at Star Carr* (Conneller 2004), and the aforementioned works by Dušan Borić on volatile bodies and animality (Borić 2005a; 2007) drawing from indigenous, relational ontologies (cf. Viveiros de Castro 1998), Mesolithic research worlds became populated by hybrids, bodily transformations, and unstable boundaries. Similarly concerned with "alternative zoontologies," but more in line with ethological and multispecies perspectives (cf. Haraway 2003; 2008), a number of Mesolithic studies began to draw attention to the co-shaping, embodied, and sensory nature of human-animal interaction (Overton and Hamilakis 2013; Brittain and Overton 2013; Overton 2018; 2019; Pasarić and Warren 2019). It was these theoretical perspectives that largely shaped the ways I engaged with multispecies entanglements in the Danube Gorges.

The medieval Studenica Monastery

The context of the medieval Studenica Monastery could not have been more different. Located in south-western Serbia, it represents one of the oldest, largest, and richest medieval monasteries in the region. It

was built in the late 12th century as an endowment of the Grand Prince (*Veliki Župan*) Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the influential Nemanjić dynasty who became revered as Saint Simeon after his death. Various aspects of archaeological research of the monastery were published in detail, including its history of excavation and conservation, sacral and profane architecture, material culture (Popović 2015), and the features of the monastic economy inferred from the study of mammal bones (Marković 2015). I was invited to study the fish bones by my colleague Nemanja Marković, an archaeozoologist specializing in the medieval period. No fish faunal assemblages from medieval Orthodox monasteries had been analysed up to that point, and neither of us knew what to expect. To my surprise, apart from species found more or less locally (carp, catfish, pike), the assemblage from Studenica also contained remains of Danubian sturgeons (beluga, Russian sturgeon, and stellate sturgeon). This was quite remarkable, given the monastery's secluded location in a hilly forested landscape around 200 km away from the Danube as the crow flies (Fig. 1). Moreover, the skeletal element distribution and the size estimations suggest that large sturgeons (the beluga ranging in total length between c. 2 and 3.6 m) were most likely brought to the monastery whole or in large chunks. A journey like that, probably involving horse or ox carts, would have taken days, or more likely weeks; the costs of fish transportation and preservation were certainly high. We were soon joined by medievalist Milomir Maksimović, who introduced us to various relevant historical sources – charters granting rulers and monasteries the rights to the most lucrative fisheries, travel reports indicating that fish was largely unavailable to the common people, and liturgical books (*typika*) prescribing rules on all aspects of monastery life, including diet. The early 13th century *Studenica Typikon* specifically prescribed that fish from the Danube should be procured for the annual feast commemorating the monastery founder, which was attended by the subsequent rulers, the abbots of other monasteries, and other notable guests (Anđelković and Rakićević 2018). Therefore, in our writings on the fish faunal assemblage, the Danubian sturgeons became luxurious, high-quality foodstuffs intended for the elite consumers, in a display of status, power, and clerical authority (Živaljević *et al.* 2019).

In other words, despite being fairly similar in terms of the taxonomic composition (Fig. 3) and sharing the same analyst, the faunal assemblages from the Mesolithic-Neolithic Danube Gorges and the Studenica Monastery were interpreted in radically different ways, reflecting the distinct language, themes, and perspectives of hunter-gatherer and medieval archaeologies.

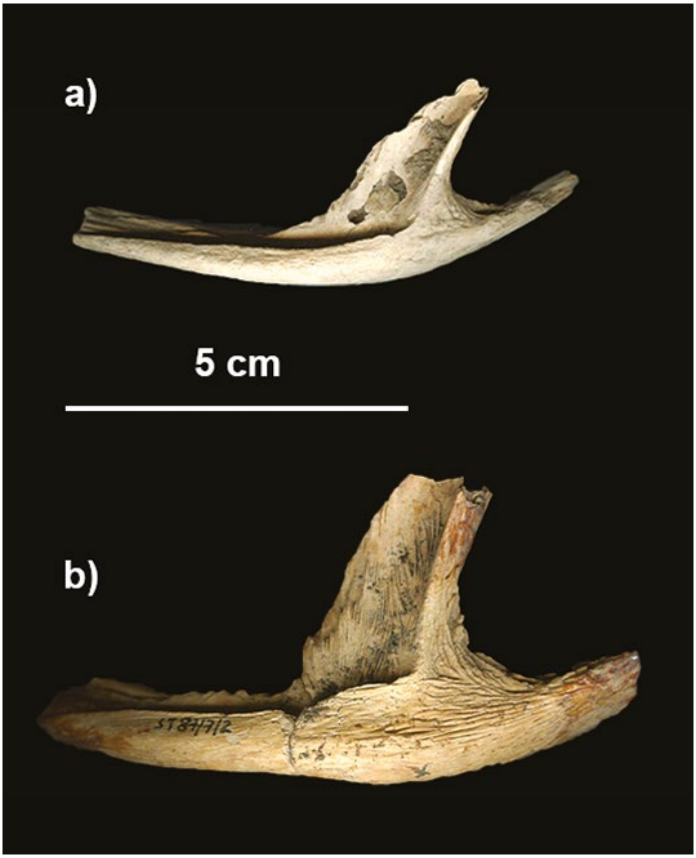


Figure 3. Is a fish always a fish, and a bone always a bone?
Beluga sturgeon maxillary bone from the concentration of disarticulated human and animal bones and artefacts, Lepenski Vir (a), and from the waste deposition area along the outer side of the rampart of Studenica Monastery (b) (photos by Ivana Živaljević).

The diversity of human experience

Obviously, there are many reasons for the archaeological narratives to unfold as they do. Medieval societies were highly hierarchical, with kings, lords, and high religious officials leading strikingly different lifestyles in comparison to the commoners. At the same time, as noted by Terry O’Connor, “our transference of values into the medieval centuries assumes a familiarity with the medieval mind that we would not assume for prehistoric periods” (O’Connor 2007, 6). Clearly, regardless of the cultural context we happen to study, such assumptions need to be critically

engaged with. Reflecting on the ways various animals were treated, interpreted, and written within the cultural-historical tradition of Serbian medieval archaeology, Monika Milosavljević has shown that they were often marginalized or relegated to symbolic or economic resources, while on occasion sparking enough interest to be documented, especially if associated with "unusual" contexts (Milosavljević 2019). At the same time, she offered new readings of the diverse faunal record from the medieval period, drawing from ethological insights, embodied and gendered experiences, cultural attitudes, and habitual practices interconnecting humans and nonhumans in life and death (Milosavljević 2021). Thus, while the contextual provenance of sturgeon remains at a high-status monastery such as Studenica certainly afforded particular ways of writing about them, there were also other important aspects of interspecies engagements and other stories to tell.

At the same time, when considering social hierarchies, it also goes without saying that such narratives would have been largely out of place in a Mesolithic context. The archaeological record from Lepenski Vir, namely the occurrence of fish and wild game remains in all of the excavated buildings (Srejović 1972; Dimitrijević 2008; Živaljević 2017) is reminiscent of anthropological accounts of sharing practices, singled out as one of the key features amongst hunter-gatherer societies (Bird-David 2015; 2019). The architectural features themselves were fairly similar in terms of construction and furnishing (Srejović 1972), in some cases with empty sockets in the floor behind the hearth area, indicating that the sandstone sculptures were not exclusively bound to particular buildings but occasionally changed locations (Borić 2005a). Obviously, this does not imply uniformity of the lived experience amongst the various members of the Lepenski Vir community, but only that the common criteria for "detecting" social inequality (e.g., access to foodstuffs and other goods, access to esoteric knowledge, intra-settlement organization, etc.) cannot uncritically be applied to every cultural context.

Here, it is worth considering these issues in light of the recent book *The Dawn of Everything* by David Graeber and David Wengrow. In their large-scale and complex overview of global history, the authors argue that inequality has no origin, simply because there had never been human societies predating it. Social hierarchies were always there, but there was also a kaleidoscope of social possibilities of engaging with them – by negotiating, perpetuating, or dismantling them. When discussing hunter-gatherers, Graeber and Wengrow mainly base their argument on complex societies of the North American continent, contrasting for example the slave-owning aristocracies of the Pacific Northwest, known for their lav-

ish potlach feasts, and the foragers of Northern California who occupied themselves with the accumulation of wealth while actively avoiding slavery and other forms of hierarchy (Graeber and Wengrow 2021).

To some extent, similar narratives centred on power, ideology, prestige, acculturation, and resistance also figured in the study of Early Holocene hunter-gatherers (including the Danube Gorges setting), particularly in interpretations of burial grounds as a form of legitimizing control over the landscape, or in debates on the nature of forager-farmer interactions (e.g., Chapman 1993; Radovanović and Voytek 1997). From the turn of the century, along with new phenomenological and relational approaches, archaeologists engaging with the Danube Gorges context began asking whether there were also other stories to tell, centred on social memory, materiality, embodiment, and personhood (Borić 1999; 2005b; 2005c). As previously mentioned, my research largely unfolded within this theoretical framework, while also including the perspectives of archaeozoology, anthrozoology, and multispecies archaeology. Here, I pose another question. Instead of framing hunter-gatherer research in ontological terms, and the study of everyone else in ideological terms, how do we create narratives that do justice to the diversity of human experience?

Mutual becoming and a world in flux

If there is indeed such thing as a hunter-gatherer, and ultimately a hunter-gatherer worldview (cf. Porr and Bell 2012; Warren 2021), is it one of radical alterity? Are there worlds where other people, nonhuman animals, plants, and the land can be managed and owned, and others where all these actors engage as subjects-in-interaction, or even as persons? To borrow from Paul Nadasdy's recent paper (Nadasdy 2021) – just how many worlds are out there? This "multiple-world thesis" stemmed from the important project of decolonizing anthropological theory, especially in terms of taking native ontologies seriously and not as mere "superstition." However, anthropologists such as Graeber and Nadasdy have pointed out (each from their respective stance on the "ontological turn") that this view does little to dismantle colonial legacies and comes uncomfortably close to becoming a "meta-ontology" divorced from the intricacies of human experience, as well as a "moral or political apartheid" (Graeber 2015); i.e., it may result in more radical Othering and an infinite proliferation of realities with limited or no possibilities of communication between them (Nadasdy 2021). Instead, Nadasdy proposes a single world whose properties do not simply exist but rather unfold through different ways of relating. Here, he draws from the works of Karen Barad (Barad 2007) on the nature

of phenomena such as light, whose properties (particle or wave) "depend entirely on the experimental apparatus," emerging from different "agencies of observation" and "particular sets of practices that enact them" (Nadasdy 2021, 362). In an anthropological context, he refers to Mario Blaser's distinction between the caribou, as understood in Canadian wildlife management politics, and the *atîku* (caribou-persons), with whom the Innu hunters of Labrador are intimately connected through stories, generosity, sharing, and animal spirit masters (Blaser 2016). Nadasdy argues that neither is more "real" than the other, but rather that different kinds of entanglements occur in intimate, face-to-face encounters, as opposed to, for example, aerial surveys of animal populations or colonial land acquisition practices. Such ways of relating are also bound to intersect, for example when members of indigenous communities become landowners, wildlife management officials, or anthropologists. In other words, the reality is not composed of fixed objects but of relations and processes, by ways in which humans, nonhumans, and materials get "caught up in these currents of the lifeworld" (Ingold 2007, 1).

Getting "caught up" certainly involves a level of familiarity, immersion, and engagement, and is bound to the lived experience. Ingold's perspective of "dwelling in the world" – largely inspired by hunter-gatherer lifeways – implies that those who inhabit the environment do not perceive it as a separate domain of "Nature." Rather, "one gets to know the forest, and the plants and animals that dwell therein, in just the same way one becomes familiar with other people, by spending time with them, investing in one's relations with them the same qualities of care, feeling and attention" (Ingold 2000, 47; see also Bird-David 1999). Similarly, in the context of the British Mesolithic, Nick Overton explored various ways (other than the episodic hunting events) humans and nonhumans could have established meaningful relationships and figured prominently in mutual experiences, simply by inhabiting the shared environment (Overton 2019).

But this way of being in the world is certainly not exclusive to hunter-gatherers. For example, when a scientist is engaging with a laboratory mouse (perhaps the closest we get to objectifying a living being), e.g., observing how it *acts* and *feels*, giving it a pet name in addition to the Linnaean *Mus musculus* and forming a communicative relationship, they are not slipping in and out of different ontological attitudes. Rather, both the scientist and the mouse are affecting the ways the interactions occur; they relate to each other through practices that mutually constitute them (cf. Haraway 2008). If only a one-way, subject-object relation is emphasized in scientific narratives, it tells us more about the ways we do science than it does about our experiences of inhabiting this world with others.

In the Danube Gorges context, this "co-shaping dance of trans-species encounters" (cf. Haraway 2008, 4–5) involved a high degree of familiarity, an expectation that the large sturgeons would return as they always did, synchronization of the rhythms in the settlement with their seasonal migrations, remembrance of past encounters and engagement in new ones, and experiences of individual animals rather than generic categories of species. The same community involved in fishing would have shared the meat afterwards, which could sustain them for prolonged periods. Stories were told and retold, some of them materialized in the sandstone sculptures or burials accompanied by sturgeon remains, or aligned in relation to the river flow.

Finding oneself in front of a plate with a tasty chunk of sturgeon meat, amidst a religious celebration in a high-profile medieval monastery, would have been something completely different. Obviously, the whole cultural context was different, involving specific kinds of relations that led to the assembly of particular persons at the monastery table. But the attitudes towards animals also differed (especially to those not intimately known), as did the practices by which certain foodstuffs became "luxurious" and "exotic." These foodstuffs from faraway lands certainly had stories to tell, but they were of a different kind. It is worth asking what sorts of stories would emerge from direct encounters between sturgeons and the fisherfolk who supplied the monasteries and royal courts. The experiences of the latter were certainly different from those of the ruling elite, not least because the catch was not intended for them (see Bartosiewicz et al. 2008, 50). It was a way of making a livelihood in a highly hierarchical world. But the difference is also in that they had intimate knowledge of sturgeons, not as food, but as living and responsive beings. All of these features constituted the diversity that is lived experience.

Conclusions

In this short overview of various approaches to hunter-gatherers, supplemented by snippets from historical archaeologies, I have tried to answer the question of whether hunter-gatherer archaeozoology exists. Obviously, there are particular ways we write about human-animal relations in Mesolithic contexts, not least because of the long history of entanglement of prehistoric archaeology and the anthropology of hunter-gatherers (for the lack of a better term). This also has to do with the materiality of the archaeological record, often consisting of little more than lithics and scraps of animal bone. Nonetheless, archaeologists engaging with various prehistoric contexts have come a long way from Hawkes's "ladder of in-

ference" (Hawkes 1954), i.e., the notion that once we exhaust the issues of subsistence, economy, and technology, inferring about the social lives of people in the prehistoric past becomes increasingly difficult. It is precisely the nature of the archaeological evidence that has placed animals and human-animal relations at the forefront of hunter-gatherer research, opening the possibilities for new renderings of the material, the biophysical, and the social. More precisely, in line with Donna Haraway's concept of "Naturecultures" (Haraway 2003), they came to be understood as intrinsically entwined.

Of course, such approaches to human-nonhuman relations are not limited to hunter-gatherer research in archaeology. Authors such as Kristin Armstrong-Oma (Armstrong-Oma 2010) and Gala Argent (Argent 2016) have populated post-domestication contexts with people, sheep, goats, and horses, forming meaningful and mutually impactful relationships. While these studies share a common view of nonhuman animals as sentient, active participants in social relations, they also explore their way of being with humans in historically specific ways. In medieval archaeology as well a number of studies began to address the multifaceted nature of human-animal relations, engaging with contexts abound with archaeozoological, mortuary, historical, and iconographic evidence (e.g., Pluskowski 2005; 2007; Bartosiewicz and Choyke 2021).

To conclude, there *are* particular ways we construct narratives in hunter-gatherer (or any other) archaeo(zoo)logy. They unfold through a complex interplay between the materiality of the evidence, underlying assumptions of the analyst, specific research themes, and theoretical frameworks. And yet, while highly contextual and greatly asymmetrical, human-animal relations are never one-sided, allowing for a myriad of outcomes, experiences, and ultimately, different ways of writing them. Narratives change along with our modern preoccupations and ways of being with others, human and nonhuman. Ultimately, the rising interest in multispecies assemblages, entanglements, kinship and sharing, inequalities, and various ways of relating to the environment, reveals something important about our own experiences in a changing world. It might also help us understand what is it that we *need* from our "invented" hunter-gatherers.

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ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK: EGYPTOLOGY AND THE THIRD SCIENCE REVOLUTION

Abstract: Ongoing debates on the third science revolution seem to provide a heavy dose of optimism that issues such as identity can now finally be resolved using stable isotope analyses and ancient DNA. Such an understanding of identity falls into the essentialist trap, similar to the one of racial anthropology and culture historical archaeology, and more often than not relies on inherited ideas and concepts that are left unchallenged. This paper discusses the utilization of inherited ideas in combination with novel scientific methods, using the case of the Sea Peoples of the Late Bronze Age as an illustration. The paper also discusses the recent impact of the third science revolution on Egyptology using stable isotope analyses as an example. Showing that someone was a local or an immigrant in a particular community is indeed useful information but it does not provide all of the answers about population dynamics and identity constructs. Finally, the paper argues that not all archaeological communities can meet the central tenets of the third science revolution for reasons of economic inequality and the political environments in which they operate.

Keywords: third science revolution, identity, stable isotope analyses, Egyptology

Introduction

Archaeologists and historians have assigned various identities to past populations ever since the beginning of their respective disciplines (Babić 2008; Jones 1997; Lucy 2005; Matić 2018a; Matić 2020). During the 19th century in the Global North/West, racial anthropology using craniometry was a standard method of racial identification. The scale was used to

assign races to populations of the past based on values taken from various actants (sensu Bruno Latour) such as chimpanzees, living humans, skeletal remains of past and modern populations, but also Roman statues, such as Apollo Belvedere (Mihajlović 2011). With the emergence of archaeological cultures as defined sets of material remains (Childe 1929: v-vi), the races identified by anthropologists were associated with cultural expressions and ethnic identities, usually in the form of pottery "styles." Some archaeologists continue with this practice even today, sometimes even grouping stratigraphically unrelated finds based on assumptions as simple as the following: 2nd millennium BCE Nubian pottery was found in settlement contexts of Tell el-Dab^{c}a, a site in Egyptian Eastern Delta; people with poorly preserved and supposedly "Negroid" crania were buried at this site; therefore, Nubian pottery belonged to this people, even though it was not found in their burials (Bietak, Dorner and Jánosi 2001; for criticism see Matić 2014; Matić 2018b).

Other archaeologists have abandoned skeletal racial designations but continue to attach them to archaeological cultures. In this process, archaeological cultures became material expressions of peoples or ethnic groups (Childe 1929: v-vi). These ethnic groups were even searched for in written sources describing the populations living on the territories where particular archaeological cultures were identified (see Jones 1997; Lucy 2005 and Matić 2020 with further references for examples and criticism). The problem is that these written sources are often external to the population they describe, and their contents frequently reflect prejudices or world views of outside observers rooted in their own class, gender, and ethnic identities (e.g., ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman authors).

This rather short and generalizing overview of approximately two centuries of archaeological thinking on collective identities does not do justice to the numerous critical voices, whether contemporary or later (Babić 2008; Jones 1997). Nowadays, no serious archaeologist would group stratigraphically unrelated data nor assign race to values determined based on measurements of poorly preserved crania. No serious archaeologists would trace population movements based solely on changes in the archaeological record.

Nevertheless, in contemporary archaeology, there seems to be a widespread view that many of the problems outlined above can be resolved using methods broadly grouped under the umbrella term "archaeological science." These include chemical analyses of materials from which archaeological remains were made (e.g., petrographic analyses of pottery, led isotope analyses of metal) and chemical analyses of human and animal remains (stable isotopes and DNA analyses), which I will turn to later. Furthermore, many now believe that the gradual accumulation of data

obtained through such analyses can reconstruct the movements of entire populations without referring to archaeological cultures or pots. Since processing such a vast amount of data requires storage and management, advances in computer technology have also been celebrated. Moreover, since the acquisition of such data for various sampling procedures and laboratory analyses is costly, substantial national and international funding schemes such as those supported by the European Research Council (ERC) are required. It has been suggested that all of the above contributed to the so-called "third science revolution" in archaeology, with the preceding two revolutions triggered by advances in geology and zoology, as in the first revolution of the 1850s-1860s, and radiocarbon dating, as in the second revolution of the 1950s-1960s (Kristiansen 2014: 14–15; Kristiansen 2022: 1).

Whereas most archaeologists are celebrating these developments, and with good reason, others have expressed a healthy dose of scepticism regarding premature optimism (various issues are summarized by, among others, Babić 2022; Ion 2019; Jones and Bösl 2021). Some critical voices have also stressed that although archaeologists do not study the distribution of pottery styles to trace population movements anymore, they still label the samples they send for various analyses with terms originating from an entirely different mode of thinking, culture-historical archaeology (Eisenmann et al. 2018; Frieman and Hofmann 2019; Hakenbeck 2019; Ion 2017: 187; Ion 2019: 29). To illustrate this, I will briefly discuss a case in which an outdated Egyptological concept was utilized by non-Egyptologists as a fact that can be further challenged using novel scientific methods.

Sea Peoples 2.0 and Science Revolution 3.0

In 1855, French Egyptologist Emmanuel de Rougé coined the term "peuple de la mer" ("Sea Peoples") to describe the figures of enemies represented on the reliefs of the Medinet Habu temple of King Ramesses III (c. 1221–1156 BCE). For de Rougé and his students and successors, such as François Chabas and Gaston Maspero, these Sea Peoples were a population mass that migrated from the Balkans towards the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean, destroying the centres of civilization in Greece (Mycenaean palaces) and Asia Minor (Hittite palaces) before finally reaching Egypt where they were defeated by kings Merenptah (c. 1213–1204 BCE) and Ramesses III. Maspero even called this migratory mass "invading hordes." The root of this narrative is Balkanisation, a discourse alluding to reversion to the tribal, backward, primitive, and barbarian, combined with the

culture-historical model of mass migrations (see Matić and Franković 2020 with further references and arguments). However, this narrative has been criticized by numerous Egyptologists for decades and was recently confirmed based on the analyses of lists of war spoils arguing that the movements of various Sea People groups were not of the scale of mass migration but rather of small pirate raids, blown out of proportion in ancient Egyptian temple decorum (see Matić 2022 with further references). The historicity of ancient Egyptian texts dealing with the Sea Peoples has also been refuted or, better said, properly contextualised within the royal rhetoric of the late New Kingdom in Egypt (Wüthrich and Matić 2023 with further references). Nevertheless, neither the criticism nor the recent Egyptological research is taken into consideration by colleagues studying prehistoric Europe, who still look for the roots of the so-called Sea Peoples phenomenon.

For example, Wolfgang Kimmig looked for the origin of this phenomenon in the movements of Urnfield culture bearers from central Europe towards, among else, the Balkans and further into the Eastern Mediterranean and across the Levant into Egypt. The same is assumed by archaeologists in the Balkans such as Borivoj Čović and most recently Kristian Kristiansen (see Matić and Franković 2020: 156 with further references). Furthermore, the same connection to the Sea Peoples phenomenon is implied by the project "The Fall of 1200 BC: The Role of Migration and Conflict in Social Stress at the End of the Bronze Age in South-Eastern Europe" (2018–2023) funded by the ERC Consolidator Grant. The official logo of the project is based on a Sea People figure depiction from the Medinet Habu temple, while the project's description includes a photo of the so-called Naval Battle of Ramesses III depicted on one of the Medinet Habu temple reliefs. The description states that:

> "hotly debated ancient tales of migrations are tested for the first time using recent advances in genetic and isotopic methods that can measure human mobility" (http://www.thefall1200.eu/about.html).

However, "ancient tales of migrations" is a rather vague reference to texts from different Bronze Age societies describing fundamentally different things in a fundamentally different ideologically framed way. It also remains unclear which kind of migrations are alluded to here: individual, small-scale, or large-scale ones? (cf. Knapp 2021 for a balanced approach to Bronze Age migrations). Last but not the least, it remains unclear which samples will be taken to explore the implicit connection with the outdated 19th-century Egyptological construct of the Sea Peoples. Egyptology, which should be the first discipline to be consulted when framing such

a research subject, is left out of the equation. Based on the project team's expertise (http://www.thefall1200.eu/team.html#fh5co-tab-feature-vertical7), one gets the impression that primacy is given to natural sciences, with archaeology or, in this case, Egyptology serving as a handmaiden of natural sciences (cf. Stutz 2022: 46).

This is not to say that the data obtained by "The Fall of 1200 BC" project is not significant, but rather the contrary. The Balkans is one of the regions included in this project since it lacks data acquired using state-of-the-art techniques, not because its local archaeologists lack the necessary knowledge or expertise, but due to its weaker economic power compared to Western European countries. It comes as no surprise that archaeologists in the Balkans are increasingly opening as hosts to economically better-suited colleagues from Western and Central Europe. Such alliances allow them to conduct their work and obtain the results they need but also open the doors to publications in high-impact journals which they can use for climbing up local scientific ladders. In making such alliances, the premises in the background must be considered. To illustrate, one Facebook post of the partner institution of the "The Fall of 1200 BC" project, the National Museum of Pančevo in Serbia, states:

> "THE FALL OF 1200 project [...] investigates changes in migrations and conflicts in the time of the famous Trojan War, when proto-urban cultures of central Balkans and many great civilizations in the Aegean and Asia Minor suddenly collapsed. Evidence for these turbulent times and great migrations and conflicts are found even in ancient Egypt where Ramesses III stopped the attacks of the Sea Peoples in 1176 BC" (Facebook page post of the National Museum of Pančevo, author's translation from Serbian).

Here one finds many ghosts of the discipline's past: the Trojan War as a historical event and not a layered narrative reflecting numerous conflicts of the Bronze and Iron Ages, the great migrations, and the heroic deeds of Ramesses III. What is more, reading through the work packages of "The Fall of 1200 BC" project one does not get the impression that anything conducted in the project is in any way related to ancient Egypt or the Sea Peoples (http://www.thefall1200.eu/workpackages.html#fh5co-tab-feature-vertical4). The choice of categories and knowledge of their complex research history should at least be as state-of-the-art as the methods and techniques employed.

Since similar examples are abundant, I would like to juxtapose interpretative optimism and scepticism when it comes to the third science revolution in archaeology by using an example of a discipline that has for most of its existence stayed on the margins of serious debates in archaeological method and theory – Egyptology. My goal is to demonstrate that:

1. The existence of novel techniques, methods, and analyses does not necessarily mean that they are available to everyone. The determining factors include not only the successful acquisition of substantial funding but also access to laboratories and staff, or the lack of permission to sample and export samples out of the country from which they originate (e.g., Egypt).
2. The consequences of working under conditions unparalleled to the ones in the Global West impede Egyptologists from other countries from using state-of-the-art methods, where going beyond state-of-the-art is wishful thinking.
3. The introduction of new data obtained from analyses not conducted by archaeologists *stricto sensu* does not in any way remove highly problematic ideas and concepts used as an interpretative background for this newly obtained data. The introductory example of the Sea Peoples was meant to illustrate this point, which will be developed further in the paper.

To demonstrate the three main points listed above I will turn to two case studies of stable isotope analyses originating from modern Egypt and Sudan, the territories of ancient Egypt and Nubia. In conclusion, I will explain why "scientific revolution" is an inappropriate term or model for understanding knowledge production in archaeology.

Stable isotopes and unstable categories

Strontium, oxygen, and lead isotopes are used in the studies of the provenance of human remains and involve the comparison of isotope ratios in tooth enamel and bone. Whereas human bone is more dynamic, the enamel in teeth is formed in early childhood and undergoes little change. Values in human teeth indicating the place of birth and early childhood that do not match those from bone (place of death) may indicate immigrants (Weiner 2010: 32–5). However, in practice, archaeological studies of stable isotopes face complex problems due to the varieties and specificities of the underlying geology. As for Egypt and Sudan, it has been argued that the Nile River's complex fluvial regime, the underlying geology of the Nile Valley, and the Nile's source regions, pose obstacles to stable isotope analyses (Woodward et al. 2015). Another identified problem is the pristine preservation of collagen on some sites in Sudan because of the heat and dry sandy soil (Spencer, Stevens and Binder 2017: 46). Geological research has also pointed to the impact of aeolian sands on the sedimentary composition of the Nile River and its tributaries. This seems to be a major

confounding factor in the strontium signatures of water. Since these signatures are highly variable and depend on climatic conditions, they could significantly alter isotopic values and potentially lead to erroneous conclusions (Woodward et al. 2015). Nevertheless, there are several attempts to analyse stable isotope ratios from Egyptian and Sudanese sites in order to better understand population movements and collective identities.

Ever since the 19th century, archaeologists studying ancient Egypt and Nubia relied on a set of assumptions about the racial supremacy of ancient Egyptians. These assumptions were rooted in the colonial experience of scholars at the time. Much in the tradition of culture-historical archaeology, early 20th-century archaeologists of Egypt and Nubia adopted a diffusionist model according to which the superior ancient Egyptian culture replaced the local Nubian culture, and the locals were simply acculturated (Matić 2018a; Matić 2020; van Pelt 2013). The diffusionist model was challenged by authors drawing theoretical foundations from postcolonial theory and suggesting cultural entanglement as a balanced approach (van Pelt 2013; see also Matić 2023). However, although it challenged the diffusionist model, the novel understanding of identity in Nubia did not take the bioarchaeological data into account. Only a few studies took on this task. It was possible to identify individuals from Thebes in Upper Egypt at the Nubian site of Tombos, a cemetery in Upper Nubia, because strontium at this site probably comes from the soil rather than the Nile water (Buzon, Simonetti and Creaser 2007: 1400). Another study of strontium isotope values from the same cemetery argued that individuals from Egypt can be traced during the New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1070 BCE), but only locals can be traced throughout the first millennium BCE, as well as some immigrants most likely coming from the south (Buzon and Simonetti 2013: 7). The most recent study of strontium isotope ratios of samples from nine individuals from tomb 26 from cemetery SAC 5 on Sai Island in Upper Nubia argues that all of them were locals. The burial, which dates from the 15th to 13th centuries BCE, was discovered as part of an Egyptian-style rock-hewn shaft tomb with a pyramid as a superstructure. It contained two painted wooden coffins, scarabs, faience vessels, pottery vessels, one stone shabti figurine, fragments of funerary masks with inlaid eyes, and gold foil. According to the inscribed finds, the burial belonged to an Overseer of Goldsmiths Khnumose and his unnamed wife (Retzmann et al., 2019). These individuals had an Egyptian burial with Egyptian material culture, and Khnumose had an Egyptian name and titles. However, the authors of this study cautiously avoid labelling these locals more closely, and rightly so. The tomb's use spanning two centuries allows for several alternative scenarios. The buried locals could have been descendants of immigrating Egyptians who settled in Nubia, with their

strontium isotope values being local but their origin being Egyptian. They also could have been descendants of local Nubians who due to various reasons adopted some aspects of Egyptian material culture and identity. The essential point here is that these interpretations must take the temporal component into account. Some five hundred years of New Kingdom Egyptian occupation of Nubia were a dynamic period during which people moved around and even came as deportees from far-away lands such as Anatolia and the Near East (Langer 2021). Stable isotope analyses are a useful and important method, but other evidence, such as written sources and the equifinality of the archaeological record, must always be considered. The second-case study demonstrates the same.

The most recent study of strontium isotopes ratios from human tooth enamel was conducted on 75 individuals from three different cemeteries at Tell el-Dabᶜa, ancient Avaris, capital of the Hyksos kingdom in the eastern Delta during the Second Intermediate Period, ca. 1650–1550 BCE (Stantis et al. 2020). The Hyksos were the ruling class of foreign descent who nevertheless used the titles and iconography of Egyptian rulers, even appropriating some Egyptian epithets for foreign rulers. Most of the Hyksos kings even had foreign, North-West Semitic names (Roberts 2013). The study by Stantis et al. (2020) included 75 individuals, out of which 67 come from area A/II, seven from area F/I, and one from area A/I of a site which at the time spanned 260ha. Approximately 1000 tombs have been excavated thus far, making the study sample unrepresentative of the population of Avaris as a whole. In another study, Stantis et al. expanded their research by analysing oxygen (δ18O) and carbon (δ13Ccarb) stable isotopes from the carbonate portion of tooth enamel (n = 75), as well as performing collagen (δ13Ccoll, δ15N) analysis of dentine and bone (n = 31). In this second study, almost all of the samples except for one (area A/I) came from the cemetery in area A/II. Altogether, samples from only 10 burials were taken, seven from stratum F of the 13th Dynasty (ca. 1800–1650 BCE), out of which three were burials of attendants, one from stratum E/1, and two from stratum D/3 of the 15th Dynasty, ca. 1650–1550 BCE (Stantis et al. 2021). It should also be noted that the authors report on their earlier results in quite an interesting manner. They state that:

> “Previous research on Tell el-Dabᶜa individuals using 87Sr/86Sr analysis of tooth enamel highlighted that the site has always been a cosmopolitan hub of movement, with more than half of all individuals (40/75 or 53%) originating from outside the Nile Delta” (Stantis et al. 2021).

Out of these 75 individuals, 36 were from pre-Hyksos rule contexts and 35 from Hyksos rule contexts. The results revealed that more than half of them spent their lives outside of the Nile Delta, displaying a wide range of

values, and that there were more immigrants in the pre-Hyksos period, with more non-local women than men. However, it was not possible to pinpoint the origin of the non-locals (Stantis et al., 2020). Although at the beginning of the paper Stantis et al. stress that they will use the term Hyksos to refer to the ruling class only, at the end of the study they state that:

> "in combination with previous archaeological evidence, this research supports the concept that the Hyksos were not an invading force occupying this city and the upper Nile Delta, but an internal group of people who gained power in a system with which they were already familiar" (Stantis et al., 2020).

This is indeed possible and has already been suggested by several authors (Forstner-Müller and Müller 2006 with further references). However, although useful, the results of stable isotope analyses from Tell el-Dab^{c}a samples struggle with the categories used to label the studied populations. The use of the label Hyksos is simply erroneous. Although many Egyptologists falsely use the label Hyksos for the entire population of Eastern Delta, Lower Egypt, and even Middle Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period, ancient Egyptians and the Hyksos rulers themselves never did this. The term is a Greek rendering of the ancient Egyptian title ḥḳ3.w ḫ3s.wt, meaning "rulers of the foreign lands." It was adopted by rulers of the 15th Dynasty who reigned from their capital in Avaris or modern Tell el-Dab^{c}a (Candelora 2017). Egyptologists have argued in favour of their foreign origin based on some of their names. Namely, all except one had North-West Semitic names. Does this mean that they came from the Levant? Not necessarily. Does this mean that their parents, one or both, came from the Levant? Possibly, but also not necessarily. Does this mean that their grandparents, one or both came from the Levant? Again, possibly but not necessarily. Since there are no known burials of the 15th Dynasty rulers, we are unable to sample their physical remains and conduct ancient DNA analyses or analyses of stable isotopes. We should not forget that the written sources and the archaeological record do indicate that people from the Levant came to Eastern Delta during the 12th Dynasty. Some of them even lived in Tell el-Dab^{c}a. Whether or not they or their descendants kept their identity and for how long is a question we cannot answer based on the available data. The Hyksos kings could very well be descendants of these people who came already during the Middle Kingdom. These descendants may not have even identified as Levantine at all but rather as local, whatever that meant in relation to the rest of Egypt at that time. There is therefore no pottery or any other material culture of the Hyksos as an ethnic group that spread over a vast territory. The Hyksos ruled over a population that was surely multi-ethnic and included people of Levantine

origin. The rivals of the Hyksos in Abydos and Thebes also ruled over a multi-ethnic population. The political situation, the demographic makeup of the land, and collective identities were far more complex than simple dichotomies (Ilin-Tomich 2016). The concluding remark of the stable isotopes study of individuals from Tell el-Dab^ca is that:

> "this research supports the theory that the Hyksos rulers were not from a unified place of origin, but Western Asiatics whose ancestors moved into Egypt during the Middle Kingdom, lived there for centuries, and then rose to rule the north of Egypt." (Stantis et al. 2020).

However, this research did not include a single sample taken from a burial of a Hyksos, a ruler of Egypt's 15th Dynasty! Earlier in the study, the authors acknowledged that although some examined individuals were indeed non-locals, their places of origin were not clear. In the conclusion of the second published study, the authors say:

> "Focusing on the isotopic profiles of noted individuals within the assemblage, we see both locals and non-locals being buried in elite Asiatic style. This is suggestive of burial customs continuing as practice in Egyptian-born Asiatics" (Stantis et al. 2021).

The first problem with this claim is the use of the adjective Asiatic, which continues to be used in Egyptology despite substantial opposition. The individuals in question are labelled as Asiatic because of the non-Egyptian burial customs found in Tell el-Dab^ca, which have the closest similarities to those found in the Levant. The second problem is that they pick just one of the many possible interpretations of their data. Namely, even if both locals and non-locals were buried in elite Asiatic style (with equids, weaponry, and attendants), this still does not mean that all non-locals were from the Levant. Indeed, in both studies the authors admit that they can only show that the non-locals are not from the Nile Delta. The third problem is that locals buried according to Levantine or Levantine-inspired customs are interpreted as Egyptian-born Asiatics, without questioning the epistemological validity of these categories in such a cultural context. Why is it so hard to imagine that a person of local Egyptian descent adopted Levantine burial customs due to their presence at the site? It seems that the authors rely on a set of dichotomies, locals vs. non-local, understood as Egyptian vs. Asiatic. Given the long history of Egyptian-Levantine interaction in the region of Eastern Delta, perhaps one should consider a much more complex picture. People of Levantine descent may have inhabited the Delta since prehistory. Some of them may have stayed for several generations, becoming Egyptian and leaving their descendants with local isotopic values. Later in Egyptian history, more people of Le-

vantine origin may have arrived to the Eastern Delta. They could have found their home in Tell el-Dabᶜa among locals of Egyptian or Levantine descent. Already, the question of what it means to be local or non-local becomes much more complex. Another problem must be added to the equation. What if the particular elite burial customs (with equids, weaponry, and attendants) of some analysed individuals have less to do with ethnic identity and more to do with social status? In this case, why would we exclude the possibility that locals started expressing their status in a Levantine manner without necessarily becoming non-Egyptians?

Another interesting observation can be made. Namely, both the stable isotope analyses of skeletal remains from the island of Sai and Tell el-Dabᶜa have been conducted as part of broader projects supported by the ERC. In the case of the former, the study was conducted by Julia Budka and her associates as part of "Across Borders: Settlement Patterns in Egypt and Nubia in the 2nd Millennium BC" (ERC Starting Grant). In the case of the latter, the study was conducted by Manfred Bietak and his associates as part of the project "Enigma of the Hyksos" (ERC Advanced Grant). Other mentioned studies were not financially supported by the ERC. In fact, a survey of the ERC project database conducted for the purpose of this paper showed that out of altogether 10 projects broadly dealing with ancient Egypt during the pharaonic period, six deal with textual sources solely. Out of the remaining four that are more archaeologically oriented, two actually deal with ancient Egyptian and Nubian communities in modern-day Sudan. One explicitly addresses the question of the identity of the Hyksos, although as seen above, the term is used more broadly than it should be in this project. The rest of the project deals with the Egyptian Eastern Desert. Therefore, it seems that archaeologists researching ancient Egypt have mostly either been unsuccessful obtaining ERC grants or have not even attempted to obtain them. Colleagues from countries that are not part of the ERC funding landscape, including Egypt and Sudan, are excluded from applying due to eligibility requirements. Moreover, as shown in the introduction, some outdated Egyptological narratives are taken for granted in non-Egyptological ERC-funded projects heavily relying on archaeometry.

The way forward is to conduct analyses that ask more theoretically informed research questions. For example, it has been argued that interdisciplinary archaeologies relying on natural sciences simplify and narrow down how archaeology is practiced, resulting in certain research topics such as rituals and religious beliefs, identity and personhood, social institutions, agency, etc., being ignored (Ribeiro and Ion 2022: 27). We have observed the same in some of the previously discussed Egyptological case

studies. Multidisciplinary data, especially coming from "hard" sciences, is rarely successfully integrated with historical and cultural contexts (Ion 2017: 179). More often than not, so-called interdisciplinary teams do not deliberate on whether or not their concepts are mutually agreeable (Sørensen 2022: 54). Another problem is that of sampling, as already pointed out in other archaeological fields (Ion 2017: 187), given that the sample size is often very small, as in the case studies previously discussed. Consequently, we are left with "hard" data and "soft" interpretations.

Conclusion

The case of Egyptology, a discipline that seems to be on the margins of discussions about the so-called third science revolution, demonstrates that:

1. The so-called third science revolution is largely a phenomenon emerging in the Global West/North. This is a consequence of economic prosperity (Ribeiro and Ion 2022: 27; cf. Sørensen 2022: 54). State-of-the-art laboratories and scientific personnel that are needed to conduct the celebrated stable isotope and DNA analyses are located in the Global West/North. This is also evident from the statistics of the Horizon 2020 funding programme, which shows that the UK, Germany, and France received 40% out of 60 billion euros in funds available. Countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania were among the least successful applicants (Schiermeier 2020). Archaeological communities outside of Global Northern/Western geopolitical and academic environments are less affected by the third science revolution and its tenets. Egyptology is one such marginal community because:

a) There are no state-of-the-art laboratories and scientific personnel for conducting third science revolution-related analyses in Egypt and Sudan. The only facility for radiocarbon analyses and petrographic studies of pottery is found at the IFAO-Institut français d'archéologie orientale, where it was founded in 2006 to allow for 14C dating in Egypt (Quiles, Kamal, Fatah and Mounir 2017). Both Egypt and Sudan are developing countries. The former has shown some development in this direction, for example by establishing Scientific Laboratories at the NMEC-National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (https://nmec.gov.eg/scientific-laboratories/) which opened in 2017. However, these facilities are not open to everyone and have yet to be evaluated for international standards.

Sudan's situation is much worse since there are no comparable facilities, and civil war broke out in Khartoum again in spring 2023, after the initial outbreak in late winter 2019.

b) Samples cannot be taken outside of Egypt (Jurman 2022). It is therefore not surprising that most of the known studies of ancient DNA from Egypt are based on human remains outside Egypt, namely remains curated in European museums. Moreover, due to the same reason, it is not surprising that the few known stable isotope studies related to ancient Egypt were actually conducted on samples from Sudan, which were analysed in European laboratories.

c) Due to a lack of access to numerous methods and techniques, Egyptologists can hardly meet the request of large funding institutions, such as the ERC, to go beyond state-of-the-art. For us to go beyond, we first need to get there. Whereas our colleagues in other fields are debating on the third science revolution, archaeologists in Egypt are still struggling with the second scientific revolution in archaeology (sensu Kristiansen 2014: 15). Unfortunately, due to the reasons stated above, Egyptology is still far from reaching state-of-the-art of the second and third science revolutions. Exceptions are the aforementioned studies based on samples taken from European museums or archaeological sites in Sudan where the exportation of samples is not an issue. Indeed, two of these studies of stable isotope analyses were conducted within ERC-funded projects, one on material from a European museum and the other on material sampled in Sudan, with exceptions that prove the point made here.

2. The introduction of stable isotopes and ancient DNA analyses in Egyptology is not a guarantee of interdisciplinarity or objectivity (*cf.* Ion 2017). As other archaeological communities have also noticed (Ribeiro and Ion 2022: 26), some Egyptologists consider natural sciences more objective and reliable. However, examples discussed in this paper have demonstrated that none of these studies can be put in an archaeological context without a thorough understanding of other data obtained from, for example, textual sources, visual representations, or material culture in the broadest sense, not to mention a theoretically informed approach to various forms of identities, including but not being limited to ethnic identity.

The ever-growing enthusiasm for so many tools and methods, often labelled as "interdisciplinary," does not make clear the fundamental question that such research is trying to answer (Babić 2022: 89; Ion 2017: 180). Furthermore, access to state-of-the-art methods and facilities is economically and politically conditioned (Jurman 2022), as is consequently the

move beyond state-of-the-art. Some fields, such as Egyptology, are unable to make such moves. This means that the term "scientific revolution" is not appropriate to describe recent tendencies in archaeological science and archaeology in general. If it does not concern us all, it is not a successful revolution; if we use new "hard" data to repeat the mistakes of outdated and disputed "soft" interpretations, we are not revolutionary at all.

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WHERE ARCHAEOLOGY AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT MEET: THE RELEVANCE OF STUDYING THE HOLOCENE HISTORY OF HUMAN-WILDLIFE INTERACTIONS IN THE CENTRAL BALKANS FOR REGIONAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Abstract: As some of the greatest threats humanity is currently facing, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, have their roots in our distant past, archaeology is becoming more and more involved in the research of their causes and effects. Archaeologists are becoming more aware of the significance of studying long-term human-environmental relationships via analysis of animal and plant remains from archaeological sites for modern environmental problems, and paleoenvironmental data are sometimes included in conservation decisions. In this paper, within the framework of the scientific project ARCHAEOWILD, which studies human-wildlife interactions in the Holocene past of the Central Balkans, we stress the significance of research that provides data on the spatiotemporal distribution of wildlife, extinction dynamics, translocations, as well as genetic diversity and dietary patterns of large mammals in the past for future wildlife management decisions in the region.

Keywords: archaeology, archaeozoology, archaeobotany, wildlife management, Holocene, Central Balkans

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, interest in archaeology for contemporary environmental issues has grown (e.g. Rick and Sandweiss 2020, Wolverton, Nagaoka, and Rick 2016). By providing a deep-time perspective of interactions between past human societies and their environment, archaeology is in the position to illuminate the causes and contribute to solutions to global environmental problems. This is especially the case with archaeozoology, which studies past human-animal relationships by analyzing animal bones from archaeological sites, as well as archaeobotany, which studies plant remains from archaeological sites. In 1994, L. Lyman coined the phrase "*applied zooarchaeology,*" and by highlighting the potential contributions of archaeofaunal research to wildlife management, he called on archaeozoologists to "broaden the scope of their inquiries to include issues that are today, and will be in the future, important to humanity" (Lyman 1996, 111). Besides *applied zooarchaeology*, other similar research fields emerged that, for the most part, only differed in their time scope – namely *applied historical ecology* (Swetnam, Allen, and Betancourt 1999) and *conservational paleobiology* (Dietl and Flessa 2009). Since the beginning of the 21st century, numerous scientific works, including empirical studies, have stressed the potential benefits of using paleozoological and palaeobotanical records in ecosystem management (e.g. Dietl and Flessa 2011, Lauwerier and Plug 2004, Wolverton, Nagaoka, and Rick 2016, Lyman 2012, Askins et al. 2007).

This paper discusses the possible intersections between archaeology and wildlife management within the territory of the Central Balkans. More specifically, it describes how research on the Holocene history of human-wildlife conflict and coexistence can impact wildlife management decisions within the framework of ARCHAEOWILD, a three-year scientific project funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia that started in 2022. The project studies wildlife archaeological remains (wild mammals and wild plants), ancient DNA and isotope analysis of wild animal bones and teeth, and textual and iconographic evidence. It is focused on the Central Balkans region, which is considered an important biodiversity hotspot (Hewitt 2011), while it also encompasses adjacent regions (i.e., Southern Pannonian Plain). The project covers a long timeframe since it is related to the Holocene, the current geological epoch, which started at c. 11,650 cal BP (Walker et al. 2009) with an abrupt climate change, i.e. global warming and the disappearance of ice sheets in the Northern hemisphere.

2. Historical perspective of wildlife distribution and baselines for conservational strategies

Previous research on the spatiotemporal distribution of large mammals over the Holocene in Europe demonstrated that human societies impacted biodiversity and that different species declined at different rates throughout the European past (Crees et al. 2016). This paper is based on a large-scale dataset and also includes a small part of faunal assemblages from the Central Balkans (c. 30 in comparison to c. 300). Therefore, high-quality data on the historical distribution of wildlife during the Holocene in the region is essential for understanding the dynamics between human societies and wildlife, as well as for providing baselines for environmental management in the Balkans. Numerous archaeofaunal (Dimitrijević, Vuković, and Živaljević 2022, and the extensive literature therein) and archaeobotanical (e.g. Filipović and Obradović 2013, Bulatović and Filipović 2022) collections from Holocene archaeological sites in Serbia have been analyzed in the past, providing information on various animal and plant taxa that were hunted, collected, bred, and cultivated by past societies. It is essential to synthesize and analyze all of the known data of wild animal and plant remains from archaeological sites spanning from the Mesolithic to the modern era on the territory of modern-day Serbia to identify and understand the wild species distribution trends between different periods and regions, individual sites and site types. With the incorporation of exploratory data analysis, the research will demonstrate how established social and environmental dynamics, such as the spread of agriculture, deforestation, climate changes, altitude, urbanization, and demography could have influenced wildlife distribution and their interaction with humans. As conservation managers use paleoenvironmental data as baselines for their strategies (e.g. Willis and Birks 2006), the results of the research on the spatial and temporal distribution of wild animals and plants during the Holocene should be presented to conservation biologists working in the region to impact their decisions.

3. Understanding the dynamics of Holocene mammal extinctions and biodiversity loss

The huge biodiversity loss, sometimes referred to as "Earth's sixth mass extinction" event (Barnosky et al. 2011), represents one of the greatest environmental crises that humanity is currently facing. The rapid trend of animal and plant extinctions in the recent past, as well as predictions about

extinction rates in the future (i.e., *Report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*), are upsetting. Many scientific studies indicated that data on extinction dynamics in the past could be used to address biodiversity problems of today (e.g. Turvey 2009a, Turvey and Fritz 2011, Faurby and Svenning 2015, Andermann et al. 2020). The majority of large quaternary mammals (megafaunal species) became extinct worldwide (except in Africa) in the late Pleistocene, and debates about the causes of extinction – which included hypotheses of direct and indirect anthropogenic factors, the environmental hypothesis (i.e., climate change), and their combination – attracted significant scientific attention (e.g. Koch and Barnosky 2006, and the literature therein, Stuart and Lister 2007). The extinctions continued throughout the subsequent geologic era – the Holocene – characterized by minimal climate variations, unlike the Pleistocene. Because environmental conditions throughout the Holocene, which were very similar to today's, and causes of Holocene extinctions were mostly of anthropogenic origin, similar to those in the modern era, the study of Holocene extinctions has the potential to provide valuable data on long-term human impacts on the ecosystem, and thus provide insights into current biodiversity loss (Turvey 2009b, 17–18). Among animal remains from Holocene archaeological sites in the Central Balkans and Southern Pannonian Plain, two globally extinct large mammals have been discovered – the auroch (*Bos primigenius*, Bojanus 1827), a wild progenitor of domestic cattle, which went globally extinct in the 17th century (Vuure 2005), and the European wild ass (*Equus hydruntinus*, Regalia 1907), globally extinct since probably the Iron Age (6th century BC) (Crees and Turvey 2014). A study of wild cattle extinction dynamics in the central Balkans and Southern Pannonian Plain suggests that a significant decline in the auroch population occurred during the mid-5th millennium BC while fragmented populations survived at least until the early medieval period (9th–12th century AD) (Vuković 2021). Archaeozoological finds of European wild ass from Early Neolithic sites in the Southern Pannonian Plain and Iron Gates (Vörös 1981) suggest that this species survived in the region until at least the end of the 6th millennium BC. We aim to estimate the last known occurrences of both species and narrow the dates of their probable extinction from the region, as the project results will provide radiocarbon dates from the selected specimens. The project also explores diachronic changes in the sizes of those animals, as well as population genetics of wild cattle in the Balkans using ancient DNA analysis of their bones from Mesolithic to medieval-period archaeological sites. The results of archaeozoological and biomolecular analysis, as well as radiocarbon dating, will provide useful insights into the extinction causes, effects, and dynamics of those globally extinct megafaunal species.

4. Translocation of wildlife in the Holocene past and biological invasions

The introduction of a non-autochthonous animal and plant species that may have a significant impact on the environment into a region represents another biodiversity threat. These invasions are not new phenomena. They occurred around the world and throughout various periods of our past when human societies would alter environments by introducing various animal and plant species into their regions. Wildlife managers and other stakeholders must have an understanding of the history of biological species introduction when making decisions about environmental restorations (Hofman and Rick 2018). Within the faunal assemblages originating from the Holocene archaeological sites in the Central Balkans and Southern Pannonian Plain, two allochthonous large mammal species have been discovered: European fallow deer (*Dama dama*, Linnaeus 1758) and leopard (*Panthera pardus*, Linnaeus 1758). It has been proposed that humans brought European fallow deer to the continent from the Eastern Mediterranean and Southern Europe between the Neolithic and Roman periods, as well as during later medieval times (Sykes 2004, Masseti and Mertzanidou 2008), and that fallow deer populations survived the last glaciation in the Balkan peninsula, where they continued to live until late prehistory (Karastoyanova, Gorczyk, and Spassov 2020). Allochthonous fallow deer populations now occupy enclosed hunting grounds in Serbia (Stevanović and Vasić 1995), while their remains have been discovered within only a few Neolithic (Dimitrijević 2008, Russell 1993), Bronze Age (Becker 1991), and Roman faunal assemblages (Vuković, unpublished data) in the region. To better understand the natural history of European fallow deer, it is important to explore the origin and status of individuals from Holocene archaeological sites in the region. The hypothesis of their introduction and possible prehistoric extinction will be explored using archaeozoological and genetic data, as well as textual and iconographic archaeological evidence. Large felids – leopards – went extinct in Europe during the late Pleistocene (Sommer and Benecke 2006), and only a few remains of the species from Holocene archaeological sites in Europe are believed to originate from traded specimens (Bartosiewicz 2009). Leopard remains, recently discovered within the area of the Roman amphitheater in Viminacium, are most likely the remains of exotic animals traded alive in the Balkans for participation in amphitheater shows (Vuković, unpublished data). As nine leopard subspecies from different regions differ genetically (Uphyrkina et al. 2001), the genetic analysis of those remains, which are currently underway, will allow us to determine the subspecies and the probable origin of leopards discovered in Viminacium. The re-

sults will provide insight into the trade routes of living animals in Roman times. Furthermore, as there are no genetic evidence of leopards in the past, the results will allow us to reconstruct the history of the species, which might aid in its conservation[1].

5. Research of genetic diversity and dietary patterns of wild mammals in the Holocene past and the conservation of (strictly) protected taxa

As already discussed in this paper, understanding the long-term impact of human activity on the environment offers important evidence for conservation management. By corroborating the large-scale data on genetic diversity and dietary patterns of wild mammals in the Holocene past, the ARCHAEOWILD project is developing a novel approach to understanding the anthropogenic impact on the environment. Two autochthonous wild mammal species were chosen for this research – a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Linnaeus 1758) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*, Linnaeus 1758). Both species occupied the region of the Central Balkans throughout the whole Holocene period, were hunted since the Mesolithic, and are now available for biomolecular analysis as their remains have been discovered within the majority of archaeological sites. The fragmented populations of these species still occupy the region and are subject to regional protection measures. According to the *Rulebook on the proclamation and protection of strictly protected wild species of plants, animals, and fungi of the Republic of Serbia*[2], the brown bear is declared strictly protected, while red deer is declared a protected wild species. Brown bear and red deer remains (bones and teeth) from c. 40 archaeological sites dating from the Mesolithic to the modern era were sampled for ancient DNA and carbon/nitrogen stable isotope analysis. Previous studies of brown bear ancient DNA included specimens from other regions in Euroasia (e.g. Valdiosera et al. 2007, Hirata et al. 2014, Molodtseva et al. 2022), while the study of ancient brown bears in Bulgaria (Mizumachi et al. 2020) provides significant evidence for understanding the formation of the Balkan brown bear populations' gene pool. However, no genetic study on either ancient or modern Central Balkans brown bear populations has been performed yet. Previous research on both modern and ancient DNA of red deer from Europe includes some Holocene samples from the Central Balkans (Skog

1 Several leopard subspecies are critically endangered, while the species is classified as Vulnerable according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (Jacobson et al. 2016, and references therein).

2 "Službeni glasnik RS," no. 5, February 5, 2010, no. 47, June 29, 2011, no. 32, March 30, 2016, no. 98, December 8, 2016.

et al. 2009, Niedziałkowska et al. 2021), albeit on a small scale. Although most analyses of carbon/nitrogen stable isotopes in wild animal remains from the Central Balkans were performed for studies of human dietary patterns (e.g. Jovanović et al. 2019), there is one study that discusses the human impact on local landscapes through stable isotopes of red deer remains from two Late Neolithic sites in the region (Gillis et al. 2020). Therefore, biomolecular analysis of red deer and brown bear remains from many Holocene archaeological sites in Serbia represents the first large-scale research on the genetics and dietary patterns of wild mammals in the region. The detailed study on the genetics of both brown bears and red deer will provide insight into the distribution of genetically specific populations of those animals in different periods. The understanding of differences between populations through time will be then used for tracing the anthropogenic influence, such as possible translocations. The studies of dietary patterns of wild mammals in the past, via analysis of carbon and nitrogen stable isotope ratios in their bones, will also be relevant for understanding the possible anthropogenic pressure on wildlife, as possible dietary changes between periods and regions might reflect environmental changes and human influence on the ecosystem. As the same individuals were sampled for both ancient DNA and stable isotopes, the results will match the data on genetics, namely population history and diet through time, which is an excellent dataset for comprehending the history of ecology of those species and may be used for their conservation in the future.

6. Conclusions and perspectives

In this paper, we stressed the relevance of studying human-wildlife interactions in the Holocene for a better understanding of modern biodiversity problems and their inclusion in conservation efforts. Alongside this, we made an overview of the ARCHAEOWILD project's research objectives, which aim to impact wildlife management decisions in Serbia (Central Balkans and Southern Pannonian Plain). A spatial and temporal distribution of wild animals and plants, as well as data on biological invasions, will provide baselines on paleoenvironments, which are needed for environmental restoration goals. Conservation scientists and wildlife managers must be informed about the specific wildlife species that occupied the region in the past to make appropriate decisions on environmental restorations. The recent "reintroduction" of the European bison (*Bison bonasus*, Linnaeus 1758) in the Fruška Gora National Park, located in the Southern Pannonian Plain in Serbia, is an example of a decision that did not take paleoenvironmental data into account. Specifically, five bison individuals from Poland were introduced to the national park located on the

Fruška Gora Mountain in March 2022. Although this national park stated on its webpage[3] that the European bisons occupied the Fruška Gora areas until c. 200 years ago, there are not any data to support this. There are, however, data that here once lived the steppe bison, *Bison priscus*, Bojanus 1827, a globally extinct species that occupied the European region until the end of the Pleistocene (Zver, Toškan, and Bužan 2021) and whose remains have been discovered in the late Pleistocene Janda cavity fossil deposit in Fruška Gora mountain (Dimitrijević, Dulić, and Cvetković 2014), among other Pleistocene sites in Serbia. There is no scientific evidence that the European bison, the species that was introduced last year in the Fruška Gora Mountain, occupied the region of Serbia in the Holocene. Beyond providing the baseline of the original distribution of wildlife species in the past landscapes of Serbia, the research on the Holocene history of human-wildlife interactions aims to impact conservation efforts of both strictly protected and protected wild mammal species in Serbia (brown bear and red deer), as well as allow for better comprehension of the history of vulnerable species outside the region (i.e., leopard). The study of the extinction dynamics of large mammals that occupied the Central Balkan and the Southern Pannonian Plain in the Holocene (auroch and European wild ass), as well as the plausible decline rate and changes in genetic populations and dietary patterns of extant wildlife, should also impact the understanding of the current biodiversity loss.

From this paper, it is clear that archaeology and wildlife management meet in theory, but do they meet in practice? It seems that most archaeological papers addressing modern biodiversity problems stress the significance of using paleoenvironmental data for contemporary issues. However, there are examples across the world of archaeology meeting wildlife management in practice. For example, in western Canada, archaeozoological research played a crucial role in the reintroduction of bison into the Rocky Mountain parks. By examining archaeological sites and historical records, researchers were able to determine the range and abundance of bison in the area before European settlement, as well as the hunting strategies used by indigenous peoples. The information was used to develop a habitat restoration plan that created suitable conditions for bison to thrive, including the reintroduction of native grasses and the restoration of natural grazing patterns (Kay and Clifford 2001, Langemann 2004). Another successful example is from the field of archaeobotany. The Nature Conservancy in Indonesia Program utilized data from archaeobotanical research on the extent of human impact on the environment in the Lore Lindu Biosphere Reserve and National Park in central Sulawesi.

3 https://www.npfruskagora.co.rs/lat/bizoni-na-fruskoj-gori/

One of the points brought forward by palynological research was that the wide grasslands that presently dominate the landscape of the region are the result of human activity over the last 2000 years and that this region was previously covered by an undisturbed montane forest (Kirleis, Pillar, and Behling 2011). This data prompted the decision to extend the forest borders (*The Nature Conservancy Indonesia Program* ca. 2004).

Although these examples point to a direct link between archaeology and wildlife management, disciplinary barriers remain and must be understood for us to overcome them. In their valuable compilation of case studies that show how archaeozoological data can influence environmental policy and management practice, S. Wolverton, L. Nagaoka, and T.C. Rick (2016) stressed that archaeological results may be invisible to conservation scientists due to discipline barriers. On the other hand, as the implementation of conservation practices depends on political, social, and economic factors, they argue that scientific research data are sometimes ignored at the expense of other social needs. This work proposed the future directions of *applied zooarchaeology*, which include producing high-quality data, publishing research results in biological journals, gaining more visibility, fostering interdisciplinarity, and engaging with the public. The planned promotion of the ARCHAEOWILD project includes scientific publications, but also public lectures, a museum exhibition, and workshops that stress the importance of archaeological research for contemporary environmental issues. The project also aims to establish connections and collaborations with conservation biologists, organizations dealing with wildlife management in the region, and national park authorities to exchange knowledge and inform researchers from other disciplines about the planned project impact. The aim is to highlight not just the importance of the project's findings for future conservation decisions in Serbia, but also the significance of archaeological research for the present problems facing humanity. We all need to be aware that even modern conservation efforts represent, as C. Hofman and T. Rick (2018) emphasized "the latest wave of a continuum of human-environmental management that extends deep into the human past."

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HERITAGE AND ITS COMMUNITIES: THE VINČA CASE

Abstract: Heritage is a complex phenomenon: it is more than just the legacy of the past that present-day people appreciate and preserve for the future. It is a discursive construction with material consequences and an impact on what is created, identified, assessed, preserved, governed, and used as individual or collective memory. Shared archaeological heritage is also created, with various communities involved in the making and application of its values and meanings. The archaeological site of Vinča is an excellent example of the power dynamics of various stakeholders, their involvement in the production and dissemination of conflicting narratives, and how memory-making practices and origin myths can become money-making practices.

Keywords: heritage, Vinča archaeological site, millennial past, critical heritage studies, public archaeology, heritage stakeholders

> *"A familiar view of heritage ... would evoke themes of continuity and nostalgia, played out through historical consumption and a kind of kitsch romanticism, oriented towards the production of* **origin myths** *connecting territory, tradition, citizenship and the nation-state"*
> *(Sterling and Harrison 2020, 23).*

Heritage is not just the legacy of the past, but a celebration of pasts chosen as inheritance to be safeguarded for the future. Heritage is a process by which people use the past, a discursive construction with material consequences (Smith 2006, 11–13) shaping ways in which people create, identify, assess, categorize, preserve, govern, and use memory.

Who is involved in this process? Who decides which pasts are prioritized in the present, which narratives are commemorated, and whose stories are neglected (Harrison and Sterling 2020, 27)? Who selects "objects and display, representations and engagements, spectacular locations and events, memories and commemorations" (Waterton and Watson 2015, 1–17)? Who influences the decision-making process? Scientific disciplines that study the past are certainly heavily involved in the creation, articulation, and transfer of the modern politics of memory (Assmann 1995, 132), which results in heritage, as well as the politics of oblivion (Asman 2018). However, they are not the only players: heritage is "interwoven within **the power dynamics of any society**[1] and intimately bound up with identity construction at both communal and personal levels" (Harrison and Sterling 2020, 23).

The heritage of Europe – and, to a great extent, the rest of the world – is profoundly determined by authorized heritage discourse (Smith 2006), which favors disciplinary and expert positions. The past is regarded as ambiguous, vague, and elusive. As such, it seeks (asks for) solely professionals to research it and specialist to safeguard it as legitimate representatives of the present who will transfer/pass on/convey heritage – all that is valuable and good from the past – into the future. The heritage concepts of governing bodies, memory and heritage policies, and heritage management, rely on the authorized heritage discourse and heritage professionals (cf. Smith 2006; McDowell 2008; Willems 2014), whose narratives – added values to particular tangible and intangible elements of the past, often changeable – are used (and misused) for the production of nation states histories, collective identity, public memory, and cultural and memorial strongholds.

These memory-making practices – the "relationship between culture, history, 'blood', 'soil' and citizenship as part of the logics of the formation of the modern nation-state" or "practices associated with colonization and globalization" (Sterling and Harrison 2020, 26) – their social and cultural impacts on, for example, heritage teaching and public heritage literacy, the involvement of various stakeholders, and the effects of heritage tourism and heritage industry, are in the focus of critical heritage studies, a relatively new and fundamentally interdisciplinary field (Winter 2013; Waterton and Watson 2015; Harrison 2018). Comprising and overlapping with various disciplines – one of them being archaeology – critical heritage studies aim "to track and stimulate multivocal, heterogeneous and dialogical ways of apprehending the past in the present" (Sterling and Harrison 2020, 26).

1 All bolded emphases are by the author.

Aware that academia is not the only sphere that articulates archaeological narratives and heritage, even though the authorized discourse is dominant in their making, an emerging sub-discipline of public archaeology, along with critical heritage studies, has become "a primary field in which the principles and processes by which the past is being managed, interpreted and communicated within the public realm are investigated" (Skeates, Carman and McDavid 2012, cf. Dawdy 2009; Khafajah and Badran 2015). Its main goals are raising awareness, fostering dynamic interests of various publics, developing a more meaningful engagement of various stakeholders with archaeological heritage, finding better means of communication, achieving measured and reasoned popularization, and working with non-professionals (Merriman 2004; Moshenska 2017). Public archaeology "addresses the forms of public engagement in archaeology, and the associated conflicts in meanings, values and ownership between the various stakeholders of archaeology" (Skeates, Carman and McDavid 2012).

But what if the ones that are utterly abusing their right to construct the past are indeed those with the greatest power – the state and governing bodies?

The case I will present is one of Serbia's most renowned and archaeologically important prehistoric sites: the Neolithic site of Vinča Belo Brdo. Excavated and researched for more than a century, Vinča holds an iconic place in the history of Serbian archaeology (cf. Nikolić 2008). Firstly, as a site where the first professionally educated archaeologist, dubbed "the father of Serbian archaeology," Miloje Vasić, performed initial excavations that were long considered impeccable, and which are now contextualised together with his interpretations (Palavestra 2020). Then, as a site with impressive archaeological records, testifying both about past strata and long-lasting excavations visible in the landscape, with an abundance of evidence, allowing permanent research and continuous reconsiderations of various topics (cf. Tasić and Ignjatović 2008). Lastly, as a showcase for generations of students regarding the various excavation and documentation strategies up until the digital age (Tasić 2011).

Until the last decades of the 20th century, for a non-professional public, Vinča was a significant archaeological site, the first known outside the country (Nikolić and Vuković 2008, 39–85), important for prehistory, occasionally visible, occasionally neglected (Nikolić 2008). However, public reception of the site, and Vinča culture in general, shifted following the political and economic crisis of the 1990s. The construction of new identities in the states formerly unified in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia centered around national, i.e. ethnic, unique histories and revelations of new testimonies of the nation's greatness (Radić 2005; 2016). In Serbia, it

did not stop at the glorification of medieval history, but went ever deeper into the past, to the origins – the very beginnings (cf. Milosavljević and Palavestra 2017). The fabricated, new "tradition" – the existence of the "Vinča alphabet" (Palavestra 2010; Palavestra 2017) – placed the Vinča site and culture in the spotlight. Thanks to the internet and social media posts (Vuković and Vujović 2014), popular literature, articles in daily newspapers and magazines (Palavestra 2010), and even scientific conferences supported by the most important scientific institution (Palavestra 2017), pseudo-archaeology and pseudo-history gained considerable significance in political and cultural memory. Pseudo-archaeological explanations took over the public sphere (cf. Vuković and Vujović 2014; Manojlović Nikolić and Mihajlović 2016), pushing scientific interpretation to the background.[2]

The issue with this was the reaction of the archaeological community and heritage professionals, as well as the involvement of governing bodies and their institutions. While the majority of the professional community continued to address pseudo-archaeological version(s) of the Vinča culture from "the ivory tower," that is, to ignore it (Grima 2016, 52–54), and the minority repeatedly stressed the non-scientific and arbitrary character of the pseudo-archaeological readings (Palavestra 2010; Palavestra 2011; Vuković 2018), some decided to step into the spotlight. As a result, the Vinča site became a metropolis (Tasić 2008, 15–38).

To commemorate one hundred years of the Vinča site research, the Faculty of Philosophy of the Belgrade University, the National Museum in Belgrade, the Belgrade City Museum, and the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts realized an important project in 2008, which included the proficiently made exhibition *Vinča. Prehistoric Metropolis* and an exhibition catalogue (Nikolić 2008). In essence, this was the first exhaustive presentation of Vinča's heritage and the first comprehensive book about the site and Neolithic culture of Vinča after Vasić's renowned work (Vasić 1932; 1936). It was one of the most visited archaeological exhibitions in Serbia (Živanović and Grabež 2011), praised for attempting to raise important issues concerning archaeological heritage conservation and presentation. However, the authors relied on marketing logic and catchy phrases, a narrative that mixed studious work and a simplified version of the past, and even indulged in alternative interpretations, without opposing stories about the "Vinča alphabet" (Cvjetićanin 2015, 577) probably believing that using the so-called public relations model of public archaeology (Holtrof 2007, 150–154) would secure further public and political support for

2 Not only for prehistory, but for other periods as well. See, for example, Babić 2001; Vranić 2011; Cvjetićanin 2015a; Kuzmanović and Mihajlović 2015.

the site's research and preservation. Values and attributes assigned in the public sphere to Vinča, initially echoing the authorized discourse but then quickly becoming firmly established in their own right, were "the first," "metropolis," and "our fellow citizens,"[3] placing Vinča as the most important early Neolithic site in the realm of **our millennial past**.

Building upon the authorized narrative that was transfused into public discourse, Vinča's newly established status as the "first metropolis" was originally used (and still is) to boost its tourist potential and turn it into a profitable endeavor. For example, the Tourist Organization of Belgrade, although cautiously referring to Vinča as "a city," easily fell into another form of "the first": during its tours, a custodian/official guide offers to "illuminate the life in this 'metropolis' of the earliest European civilization."[4] The Tourism Organization of Serbia appears to be more objective: there is no mention of a metropolis or alphabet. However, its description of Vinča is full of grand words and statements: "...in the Late Neolithic period Vinča became **a major economic, cultural and religious centre, which profoundly influenced the culture of all agricultural communities** in central and south-eastern Europe."[5]

As academia was erasing quotation marks (Palavestra 2010, 241), so were other stakeholders as well. Private enterprises, such as the one behind the *Tourist Guide of Serbia*, an integrated web-presentation of Serbian tourism potentials, although cautious about calling it a metropolis, boldly present the Vinča alphabet as the most significant achievement of this culture.[6] Similar interpretations and values associated with Vinča heritage can be found among the rare but active (non-archaeological) associations and societies. One telling example is the *Days of Vinča 2018* event. Marking 110 years since the discovery of Vinča, the *Vinčanski Neolit* society and the *Sedmorečje* studio for education,[7] together with the

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3 *Sugrađani* (Fellow Citizens), banners on the building of the Faculty, 2008.

4 https://www.tob.rs/sr/sta-videti/muzeji-i-galerije/arheoloski-lokalitet-vinca

5 https://www.serbia.travel/sr/vidi-srbiju/kultura/arheoloska-nalazista/vinca

6 "The Vinča site itself is considered to be an equivalent of a metropolis...Numerous objects were discovered, such as vessels used in everyday life, religious objects, jewellery (beads, pendants, shells), different kinds of weapons and tools (scrapers, side-scrapers, knives, axes, chisels) made of stone and bone, as well as a large number of pottery. Around 3000 objects were found, many of which were anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines. One of the achievements of the Vinča culture is the **Vinča alphabet, which has not yet been deciphered**." https://www.turistickiklub.com/sadrzaj/vinca-arheoloski-lokalitet

7 The *Vinčanski neolit* society has as its main project "the *Neolithic tourist park in Vinča*, which aims to familiarize the public with the Neolithic Vinča culture and promote its **adequate presentation and popularization**, in order to enhance the conditions for the preservation of an endangered archaeological site and its further

Association of Tourism of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, the City of Pančevo, and the Community of Starčevo, with support from the Secretariat for the Economy of the City of Belgrade and the Tourist Organization of Belgrade, organized a three-day event that featured, in addition to cultural and entertainment programs,[8] the International Scientific Conference and Investment Forum held at the Serbian Chamber of Commerce. Although their intentions were probably noble – to emphasize the importance of Vinča for Serbian cultural tourism and help its further development – narratives presented there were mostly pseudo-archaeological, or alternative at the least, ranging from referring to Vinča as the Neolithic "nest of civilization" with references to Neolithic observatories, to perspectives of the Starčevo and Vinča cultures as "ancient roads of connection and modern signposts."[9] None of the actual, present-day researchers of the Vinča site participated.

Different perceptions of heritage and multi-vocal narratives, such as depictions of the Vinča culture as the **cradle of Europe** – "progressing during one-thousand-year-long peace, thus enabling modern Europe to be born," or as a culture of giving – "unique in terms of its beauty, richness of objects, and **the earliest literacy**, [Vinča] anticipated the modern man's need to be happy by giving to others,"[10] can be expected from the continuous proliferation of "experts" of non-official history. However, the involvement of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce in the dissemination of narratives opposing and overstepping those from the archaeological discipline, clearly shows that heritage is seen as a social capital that can be easily made into a profitable endeavour.

Several months before, in March 2018, the Prime Minister's Council for Creative Industries was established in the Republic of Serbia,[11] with the purpose of – among other tasks – recommending development policies in the field of creative industries and establishing priority goals and governmental offices' activities connected with the creative industries. Major players emerged on the heritage scene, working under state control but independent of the Serbian ministries in charge.[12] Soon after, *Serbia*

research. A project of *Sedmorečje* is *Serbian Prehistoric Roads*, which hopes **to bring more than one million tourists yearly** based on **our prehistory**." http://www.vincaneolitskituristickipark.com/

8 http://www.vincaneolitskituristickipark.com/dani-vince-2018/

9 http://www.vincaneolitskituristickipark.com/prvi-dan-naucna-konferencija/

10 http://www.vincaneolitskituristickipark.com/

11 https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/odluka/2018/23/6/reg

12 Creative industries are major drivers of the economies of many countries, among the most rapidly growing sectors. While it is considered that they generate social capital

Creates – a national platform and intergovernmental body in charge of the global promotion of Serbia's export potential in the fields of creative industries, innovation, and knowledge-based economy[13] – was established. Although the creative industries primarily refer to the commercial production of new cultural goods and often include, but are not limited to, art, music, film, television, publishing, software, architecture, design, and advertising,[14] the platform seems to be guided by UNESCO's definition, according to which **cultural and creative industries** are "those sectors of organized activity that have as their main objective the production or reproduction, the promotion, distribution or commercialization of goods, services, and activities of content derived from cultural, artistic or **heritage origins**."[15] The Vinča heritage site found its way into this government-led commercialization of culture.

Evocative words have been used to stress the connection between the Vinča site and creative industries: "...one of the most significant localities of the Neolithic culture known as the **birthplace of urban community life, creativity, and artistic craft**. This is also the place of **technological revolution**...".[16] The future seems to be bright, for both various industries, foremost the tourism industry, and archaeology and heritage studies: "The Government of the Republic of Serbia will invest over three million euros to ensure this site becomes a must-see destination for **culture and tourism**, as well as a **centre of excellence for the study of Neolithic** European cultures."[17] A renovation project for the Neolithic site became an important state project, intensively promoted as *Vinča Belo Brdo – **the first modern age***:[18]

> "Vinča was a pioneer of creativity, community, and innovation. People then started to live in large communities, which was the first such example in the history of humanity. **This marks the beginning of humanity's urban**

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as well, such as cultural diversity, economic benefits ae significant. See, for example, Lhermitte, Perrin and Blanc 2015.

13 https://en.serbiacreates.rs/projekat/vinca-belo-brdo-the-first-modern-age/

14 https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095646656;jsessionid=477BA5834CD3EDEDA9182180542C0E23

15 https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/digital-library/What%20Do%20We%20Mean%20by%20CCI.PDF

16 https://en.serbiacreates.rs/projekat/vinca-belo-brdo-the-first-modern-age/

17 The project is implemented by the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, in close cooperation with the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and the national platform Serbia Creates, as well as the Ministry of Culture and Information, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, City of Belgrade, and the Belgrade City Museum.

18 https://en.serbiacreates.rs/projekat/vinca-belo-brdo-the-first-modern-age/

> **lifestyle.** The dynamic exchange of not only goods but also ideas across Europe and beyond truly makes Vinča the **first modern age.**"[19]

Simplified narratives, which were initially used to promote the project, and which even mentioned writing,[20] were now enriched with advertising language[21] and an elaborated PR model targeted at a larger audience. However, this popularisation occasionally borders on the banal: "Vinča's highly developed trade network and its geographic position near major rivers made it the Frankfurt Airport of Neolithic Europe."[22]

And somewhere amid explanations of the deep connection between past and present creativity, heritage finally emerges. "The Vinča Belo Brdo site is one of **the most significant examples of European and world cultural heritage.**" Declared a capital governmental project, this represents a vital step in preserving and presenting this "symbol of unity, creativity, and innovation that the people of Vinča left us as a **legacy**."[23]

The first phase of this capital project – an international call for a preliminary design for the development of a Vinča archaeological park, envisioned to become an open-air museum, with a visitor (museum) centre, a scientific research centre, and accompanying touristic infrastructure – was completed in 2022,[24] with construction due to begin in 2023.

A simple question begs to be asked: if Belo Brdo Vinča is an example of world cultural heritage, why it is not in the process of being nominated for the World Heritage list? Its status as a cultural property of great importance for the Republic of Serbia was recognized in 1979 (Službeni glasnik RS, no. 14/79 and 30/89), and in 2009, it was designated as an archaeological site of great importance (Službeni glasnik RS, no. 71/09). Why are heritage professionals, institutions, and offices in charge not pursuing its further (potential) acknowledgment as world heritage?

The simple answer, often heard from the heritage community, is that the rules for nomination to the World Heritage List are very strict and hard to comply with in the case of a prehistoric site. The more complicated, but also more straightforward answer, can be found in how interested

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19 Miroslav Kočić, executive manager of the archaeological site Vinča, https://en.serbiacreates.rs/vinca-the-first-modern-age/ (2022)

20 "Vinča produced the first known European examples of a 'proto'-script. Vinča symbols may in fact represent the earliest known form of writing in the world": https://en.serbiacreates.rs/vinca-the-cradle-of-european-civilization/ (2019)

21 See, for example, section "Inclusive site development" at https://en.serbiacreates.rs/projekat/vinca-belo-brdo-the-first-modern-age/

22 https://en.serbiacreates.rs/projekat/vinca-belo-brdo-the-first-modern-age/

23 Bojana Višekruna, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Serbia for Creative Industries and Science, https://en.serbiacreates.rs/vinca-the-first-modern-age/ (2022)

24 https://vinca.konkurs.rs/en/vinca-belo-brdo-archaeological-site

parties perceive cultural, natural, or mixed heritage enlisted or nominated for world heritage. That is to understand "the complex relationships between the global institution of the World Heritage Committee and national/local institutions represented by States Parties, especially in terms of their respective use of heritage for building national identities, enhancing cultural diversity and promoting sustainable tourism, development and authenticity" (Labadi 2013, 3).

The key concept of the World Heritage Convention (1972), "outstanding universal value," profoundly challenged in critical heritage studies (cf. Labadi 2013), resulted in the registration of many monuments, especially in the beginning, such as religious or other architecturally and historically significant buildings or districts, iconic places, immovable cultural property with inherent, intrinsic value that was just waiting to be identified, particularly from the western art-history and architectural point of view. Until recently, the history of the World Heritage List was the history of "big heritage" (Harvey 2008). Thus, with the exception of Stonehenge, it is indeed difficult for prehistoric monuments to find their place within world heritage: at present, out of 1157 inscribed properties,[25] only 23 are in the category of prehistoric sites.[26] Furthermore, a reassessment of the Republic of Serbia's already inscribed cultural "properties"[27] (World Heritage Serbia 2017) and those on its Tentative List[28] reveals that the state's view of the exceptional and universal, its decisions about which monuments and what pasts will be prioritized in the present, is influenced (or coloured) by the same criteria dominating the World Heritage List; these properties include only remarkable architectural heritage, medieval Serbian monasteries, Roman and medieval fortresses, Roman palaces and cities, with only a few exceptions. Publicly, the archaeological site of Vinča is among the most significant examples of European and world cultural heritage; nonetheless, governing policies regarding world heritage, ironically, exclude diversity of cultural heritage (sensu Labadi 2103, 37). It is not simply that different stakeholders hold conflicting views on the meaning, value, and ownership of heritage and heritage sites; rather, the state, as one of the stakeholders, and its official representatives and institutions have divergent stances.[29]

25 https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/

26 https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/?search=&id_keywords=75&order=country

27 In spite of conceptual, terminological, and legislative changes in the understanding of heritage (see Jokilehto 1990), UNESCO still uses term "property" in the presentation of the cultural, natural and mixed heritage at the World Heritage list website.

28 https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/?action=listtentative&state=rs&order=states

29 Unfortunately, there is also the third answer: interventions on inscribed World Heritage properties are very limited, so it could be impossible to subsequently build up a property into a profitable endeavor.

Multi-perspective and multi-vocal narratives about the Vinča site and culture, i. e. different values assigned by various stakeholders embodied in phrases such as "significant phase in European history," "the first metropolis," "the first smelter," "dynamic exchange of both ideas and goods," "the first modern age," "from new ideas to modern Europe," "proto-script" and "Vinča alphabet," or "cradle of civilisation," must all be recognized.[30] However, credibility and truthfulness are expected from relevant authorities, which are archaeologists and heritage professionals (Cvjetićanin 2018). They must be aware that leaving their "ivory tower" spaces and standpoints – academia, research institutions, museums, heritage protection institutions – means entering the political arena (Smith 2004, 9), i.e. political, economic, or social situations where experts partake in the making of pasts, the various and fluid identities, often national (Meskell 2002; Sandis 2014), in order to construct or enforce the power of the state. Choices are a political act and involve continuous negotiations (Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez 2015, 203) between professional archaeologists and various stakeholders, including the government. In these dialogues, archaeological narratives should be grounded in reliable archaeological facts and knowledge, promoting and presenting them in a popular but not populist way.

In the case of Vinča, the beginnings, origins, and appealing notions of "the first," reinforced, on the one hand, pseudo-archaeology and the narrative of Serbia's millennial past, and on the other, the government-led commercialization and commodification of heritage. It seems that the PR model of public archaeology is politically and ethically a very difficult model to sustain (Holtorf 2007, 157).

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30 Labadi (2013, 16) uses an example of the traveling exhibition "Stonehenge Belongs to You and Me," by Barbara Bender (1998), that "revealed tensions in the values associated with this archaeological site and its utilization by different stakeholders… This example demonstrates that a particular heritage property can simultaneously encompass a plurality of layers of significance."

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Since archaeological interpretation is still based primarily upon "common sense" or "accumulated knowledge," rather than theoretically grounded premises, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the topics raised in this volume. It represents an important contribution to the current debate on the role of archaeological theory in the interdisciplinary context of research into the origins of humanity and culture and shows the direction that contemporary archaeology should take.

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The collection Archaeological Theory at the Edge(s) is truly at the cutting edge of 21st-century archaeological theory. The authors cover the vast scope of the most relevant epistemological issues in current archaeology but mainly challenge the worn-out cliché of archaeology as a dusty, colonial-born, antiquarian hobby. On the contrary, they convince that archaeology is vitally and virtually necessary for everyone today. Contributions in this volume restore the faith in the value of archaeology as a humanistic discipline, but also as a critical social action, nowadays when the World is once again faced with "the sinister lights of perverted science" (to paraphrase Churchill).

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